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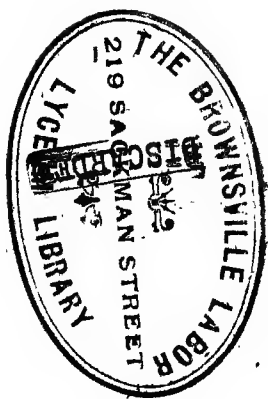
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THE

WORKING CLASSES IN FRANCE.

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A SOCIAL STUDY



By HENRY STEELE.

An account of the Social and Industrial Life of the French Artisan Classes, and a comparison with the corresponding classes in England. Also an attempt to acquaint the English reader with the true state of mind of the French workmen in respect to recent events, questions of the day, religious, political, and industrial organisations.

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INTRODUCTION.

I have been asked to write a few words of introduction to the following interesting description of working-class life in France. This I do with pleasure, although somewhat at a loss for anything to say; both because so much might be said, and because it is not really necessary to say anything. "Good wine needs no bush," and our author's work is distinctly "good wine" and commends itself without any adventitious recommendation.

In describing the actualities of working-class life in Paris Mr. Steele has done a real service to the people of this country, and one for which everyone of the readers of this little book will, I am sure, be grateful. Much has been done in recent years to bring about a better understanding between the English and the French nations, to establish a real *entente cordiale* and to eradicate from the minds of Englishmen that hatred of their neighbours across the Channel which at one time was inculcated as almost an article of national religion. Considerable progress has been made in this direction, and there is no doubt that the French are held in greater love and esteem by the people of this country at the present time than ever before. We are on the best of terms with our Gallic neighbours, but we do not know them as well as we should do. We ourselves are some-

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what fickle—a characteristic we have ever been too ready to ascribe to our neighbours—and it is quite conceivable that at any time misunderstandings or diplomatic blunders may mar the good feeling which at present exists between us, and provoke quarrels and dissensions which might be disastrous in their consequences.

But *tout comprendre est tout pardonner*. The more thoroughly and intimately we get to know and understand the French people the more readily shall we pardon or overlook their faults, if faults there be ; the more easily will misunderstandings be avoided or overcome, and the more earnestly shall we strive to maintain cordial relations with them.

In this little book the author has done a useful work in the direction of this better understanding. Many English people visit France, and especially Paris ; but very few among them know anything of the actual life of the real people ; and Paris is still, to the bulk of Englishmen, the gay capital of a frivolous and fickle nation, where vice is arrayed in its most attractive guise and the pursuit of pleasure is the only serious business. Even those whose experience teaches them better than this have not thought it worth while to give the public the benefit of their experience. The plain and simple life of the working-class is so uninteresting compared with that of the brilliant adventurer or the successful courtesan that it has been scarcely considered worth describing ; and thanks are due to our author for having rendered this service.

So far as Mr. Steele's general conclusions, based upon his intimate experience of the life of the French workmen, are concerned, I am pleased to find them correspond entirely with those I had myself formed from

a much more cursory acquaintance. I have found, for instance, in all my dealings with continental workmen—not only Frenchmen—that they were much more courteous, and even cordial, to the foreign workman coming among them than English workmen as a rule are. It has always appeared to me, too, and I have stated it frequently, that there is in public, in restaurants, in the street, &c., much less constraint and much more mutual respect among the different classes on the continent than here; while on the other hand the class feeling of the continental workman, his class-consciousness and hatred of the bourgeoisie, transcends anything to be found in this country, except among the capitalists towards the workman.

In his criticism of the position of the working-class political movement Mr. Steele shows himself to have been a keen observer, and his judgment in the main is exceptionally accurate. In this connection it may be stated, however, that of the newspapers mentioned, *Le Petit Sou* has ceased to appear and Jaurès no longer contributes to *La Petite République*, having founded a paper of his own, *L'Humanité*.

I congratulate Mr. Steele on giving us not only an instructive but an interesting and pleasing insight into Parisian working-class life, and I bespeak for his work a cordial welcome.

H. QUELCH.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

Lord Beaconsfield, in his book "Sybil, or the Two Nations," has shown how difficult it was for anyone living in the middle and upper classes to fully understand and enter into the feelings and state of mind of the artisan and labouring classes of one's own country.

He, himself, is a standing example of this truth, as most people who know anything of the working-classes will agree that the artisans and peasants in "Sybil" are purely imaginary beings. How much more difficult is it, then, to understand the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the labouring population of another country, and to interpret their social life through the medium of a language generally used to convey thoughts of another order. The author feels, therefore, that he ought to give a brief statement of his contact with the French people. He has lived altogether 23 years in France. His earliest infancy was spent in an industrial town in the East of France in the midst of a large vine-growing province. Since he could speak at all he has been bi-lingual, *i.e.*, he does not remember learning either English or French, nor did he ever know any difficulty in expressing his thoughts in either language. Up to early manhood he lived in various parts of provincial France and several years in the capital, and then came to England, where he

lived mainly in the industrial towns of the North until his return to France about four years ago. He has been brought into close contact with most classes of English and French people, but especially with the industrial classes. He has taken a keen interest in the social and political movements of both countries. But the most important part of his experiences, for the purposes of this book, was the last few years spent in the industrial faubourgs in and around Paris, and it is through the medium of these experiences that he intends to show the details of the social life and state of mind of the French working-classes. It is, therefore, with the beginning of his last residence in France that he opens this book.

H. S.

CHAPTER I.

I returned to France, after seven years' absence, in the month of October, 18—. Several days had to elapse before I started my employment in a large engineering works in Paris. As I had not secured any place of abode, I went, by arrangement, to the house of an old French friend, through whose kindly influence I had got my situation. Being newly married, I had no *impedimenta* in the shape of furniture, but my intention was to take a house and furnish.

My friend at once told me that it was impossible just then. Houses, or to be precise, apartments, or flats, are only let quarterly, even those of the most humble description, and the 8th of October was the term day. It appeared that good houses suitable to my needs were scarce, and that therefore the only houses likely to be empty so soon after the *terme* were unfit for habitation. He told me that it was very unusual for anyone coming to live in Paris to take a house at once, and that it was preferable to take up my quarters in an *hotel meublé*.* As a friend of his close by kept one, he went with me to secure rooms. The quarter in which we lived was Grenelle, and is commonly known among Parisians as the *province de Paris*, the meaning being that it is a part of the city bearing more resemblance to a country town than a suburb of the gay capital. And, in fact, the "hotel" was a large farmhouse-looking building, built with a courtyard in the centre and a gallery running around at the first storey, which was also the top storey.

* Furnished hotel or lodging-house

Though it had every appearance of cleanliness, the bareness of the bedrooms on the ground floor gave us a shock, and my wife at once deemed it impossible to stay there. These rooms, however, we were told were only for "garçons," or single-men lodgers, whereas upstairs there were rooms more suitable for married people. Madame Amélie, the landlady, said she would be extremely honoured if monsieur and madame would put up with the small bedroom, and to-morrow she would let us have her best rooms, which were fortunately at liberty just then. On the advice of our friend we agreed, and took the rooms by the month. It would be more correct to say room, as they consisted of one large room and a small kitchen about 9 feet by 6. The furniture consisted of a bed, a large wardrobe, chairs, table, and dressing-table in the large room; kitchen-table, food cupboard, and cooking-stove and coal box in the kitchen. For this we paid 30 francs a month, including changes of clean bed-linen. There were no cooking utensils, crockery or lamps, so until we had made our purchases, we had to do what many of the other lodgers did always, namely, buy our food at the café-restaurants. The name "hotel" is misleading to English readers, as these establishments in no way resemble hotels in the English sense. They do not include any provision of meals or service beyond the change of bed-linen, though the single-men lodgers often make arrangements with the servant for preparing their room. So we went to the café-restaurant to get dinner at about eight o'clock in the evening. We were joined by M. Henri, my friend, and dined at a table with the restaurant-keeper and his family, and a few of my future work-companions who stayed in the same hotel as we did. As this was a typical café, and I intend describing them fully later on, I will leave it, simply stating that it was as home-like and agreeable a company as ever I wish to eat with. We slept well that night, and next morning thoroughly enjoyed the view from our rooms upstairs, which were then ready for us. There was a pleasant outlook over a large garden on one side,

whilst the window giving on to the courtyard gave us an impression of an old-world homestead, though I must say it looked much better by moonlight when the bareness of the rooms downstairs, with their uncovered walls visible through open doors and windows, were somewhat mellowed down. My wife then found it resembled a Swiss *chalet*, though I think that was a too flattering description.

Next morning was Sunday, and as my wife was invited by Mme. Henri to come and be initiated into the mysteries of French coffee-making, and the preparation of a *vagoult*, I took the opportunity to go round with M. Henri to meet some of my future companions. As some of these remained my firm friends for the whole of my residence there, I will take this opportunity of describing one or two of them as types of French workmen.

Our first call was at a café attached to the local co-operative store. It was very pleasantly situated, and as the weather was still warm, the men were all sat outside in the garden, at little tables under little leafy arbours. At our approach they came forward effusively, and we found ourselves shaking hands—right and left hands—like long-lost brothers. It may seem ridiculous, but it was extremely pleasant. We sat down, more wine was ordered, and I became at once the centre of attraction. Had I not been introduced to them as “*un Anglais, mais un des nôtres*”? (which being interpreted means “an Englishman, but one of ours,” that is—a sympathiser with them and their movements). With one exception, they were extremely vivacious, but though their questions were very personal, they were very tactful and kindly. The exception was a very quiet young man, who only spoke at intervals and with almost girlish diffidence. We had fallen to discussing politics and other matters and I found Maurice, the quiet man, full of good sense and practical wisdom, and my impression of him was that in spite of his seeming timidity he would be unshakeable in any matter which he believed to be right.

This impression was confirmed later on, as I will relate when dealing with the marriage-customs in France.

He was very sensitive to chaff, especially about women, and indeed he was almost the only Frenchman I ever saw blush, which his comrades, in a spirit of friendly teasing, often caused him to do. In strong contrast to him was his friend "Emile," who literally worshipped him. He was a typical young Frenchman from the central provinces, about five feet eight inches in height, well proportioned, and very active in his movements, coal-black curly hair, and dark eyes, not slumberous like the Spaniard's, nor flashing like the Italian's or the Southern Frenchman's, but quick, alert, and altogether giving him the appearance of being a lively, pleasant, and good-humoured companion, full of mischief but kindly, neither giving offence to anyone, nor ready to take offence at anything or anybody. He initiated almost every topic of conversation, gave his opinions readily and defended them stoutly, but always eventually gave way and accepted the more sensible and practical views of his comrades, principally of Maurice and of M. Lefèvre. M. Lefèvre was a middle-aged man, who is also the more easy to describe when I tell you that he could have passed through any English street without exciting the idea that he was a foreigner. He was from the north, from the Pas de Calais, and, like most northern Frenchmen, was heavily built, sandy-haired and blue-eyed. Though slower of apprehension than the others, he was evidently looked up to as an authority. He was well informed, and avoided all exaggeration and extreme language. I judged him to be a man of solid reading, and, as I found out afterwards, he was one of the few French working men who possess a small library of good books, most of them confining their reading to the newspapers and periodicals, or to ephemeral pamphlets and literature from the pens of the modern French authors. As I shall show later, however, they have other means of acquiring knowledge of which they do not fail to take advantage.

In other parts of the yard were more groups of workmen; some sat round tables, others playing at "tonneau," a game consisting of throwing metal discs in a wooden box provided with holes variously numbered. The dress of the various individuals was very varied. Most of them wore wide cord trousers, held up by large red or blue woollen sashes, fancy embroidered shirts; some had short jackets, others blue blouses, others again were in their shirt sleeves. Many of them wore enormous black silk ties, and the hat most worn was a wide-brimmed, soft felt. One or two of the men were dressed in black broadcloth, with immaculate white linen and tall shiny hat. They were probably going to attend some function or ceremony—family gathering, *noce*, meeting, &c. But altogether there was an air of bohemian disregard of appearances which was very refreshing. There were one or two women in the company, and as the co-operative store adjoined, there was a constant procession of the fair sex making their provisions for the day. The women were invariably hatless, and wore their hair done up neatly and tastefully. Most of them wore print blouses and were simply but neatly dressed.

When we had been there some time, a man entered the garden and received general acclamations. He was a man of middle age, dark hair and eyes, well set up, and intelligent looking. He was dressed like an artisan in his Sunday clothes. I was informed that he was a candidate of the Socialist Party at the approaching general elections. He immediately made for my group, and I was introduced to him. He spoke English a little and tried it on me, but was pleased to find I could converse in his own tongue. But our conversation was soon interrupted by cries for a speech. The candidate mounted a table and addressed the gathering in well-chosen words. To my surprise he took advantage of my presence for an appeal on behalf of the international sentiment, and concluded by asking them to drink a toast to the English comrade to the strains of the "Internationale." He himself sung the verses of the stirring

song in a full, rich, baritone voice, and the chorus was taken up with enthusiasm.

As midday approached the people began to melt away and my friend and I went out to rejoin his wife and mine. He had invited us to take *déjeuner* with them. On our way home we passed through one of the boulevards on which a market had been held. It was just closing, and the people were gathering round an itinerant song-vendor. These are very common on fine Sunday mornings, and their mode of operation is as follows: the song merchant is also a singer and is often accompanied by an instrumentalist (violin, guitar, &c.). He will read out a verse and then sing it alone the first time, and afterwards the crowd will hum over the tune. One verse over, he will then proceed to sell copies. He will then go on with the next verse and on the second repetition will be joined by those who have bought his songs. Thus he will continue until the sale stops and the customers have caught the air. Many of these degenerate troubadours sell songs of their own composition. The theme is mainly love or politics. The political songs are almost always socialistic in sentiment. These singers and the people around them form very picturesque groups.

We had *déjeuner* at my friend's house, or, rather, in an arbour in his little garden. There are still in Grenelle and Vaugirard many old-fashioned country cottages with their gardens, though they are fast giving way to the large blocks of tenement dwellings in which the bulk of working-class Parisians live. Thus was spent my first Sunday morning as a Parisian workman.

In the afternoon, my wife and I set out together for a walk in the country. From my previous residence and visits, I had a general knowledge of the environs of Paris, and we decided to visit Meudon, famous for its Terrace and its connection with Rabelais, who was the *curé* or parish priest of that village. My local geography, however, proved somewhat weak, and I soon found that I had missed my way. Looking around for someone to

ask, we noticed a priest coming towards us. Hearing my remarks to my wife in English, he addressed us in that language, and offered his assistance, and when we told him our desire he offered to conduct us, as he was going to Meudon, *provided we did not mind his company*. There was more meaning in his last remark than I at first thought. I naturally thought that, assuming us to be English, and therefore Protestants, he feared we might object to the company of a Catholic priest. We waived his objection and accompanied him, and before long were chatting pleasantly together. We soon found kindred topics, as he was much interested in all social questions. He had lived in England several years, and had spent some time at the Ruskin Hall, Oxford, and knew Mr. Beard and the Rev. Dennis Hird of that institution, men with whose work I was very familiar. As the conversation had an important bearing on the contrast of French and English life, I cannot do better than reproduce some of it in direct language, as my recollection of almost every word is very vivid:—

“So you have come to work in Paris. Will your occupation bring you into contact with the artisans?” said the priest, after some conversation on general social topics.

“Entirely so, M. l’Abbé; I shall be with them and of them.”

“Then, I suppose, you, holding ideas in sympathy with them, desire to keep their confidence. Do you know that if you were seen, at this present moment, walking with a priest, you would have forfeited it already?”

Now, I was quite aware of the strong anti-Clerical feeling existing among workmen, though I did not then think it would take so unreasonable a shape as to condemn anyone as a Clerical for merely holding a conversation with a stranger who happened to be a priest.

“But,” I said, “so far we have differed on almost every point raised, though I admit your sympathy with the questions, and no doubt if we came to religious questions

we should differ still more, as I should also if you were a Protestant pastor. Probably, if it came to that you would shun my acquaintance if you knew my views."

The priest laughed: "I have been in England," he said, "and in *England* all topics can be discussed without arrogance and superciliousness; an atheist would see you worship a stool or light a candle at noon without a sneer at you; and a bishop, provided you were well dressed and perfumed, would agree with you calmly and serenely, though you doubted the whole *Athanasian* creed."

"You flatter us," I replied, "but the words you use are the words of Walter Savage Landor,* with this difference, that instead of *England*, he says *Paris*."

"That is true. I made the alteration purposely, and I think that though it is of course not entirely true of England, it is more so than of Paris to-day. But you have read Landor. Do many English workmen read books of that order?"

"Not really many, but a growing number, I think. In fact, on the whole I believe that serious literature is more read among the skilled artisan class in England than among any other class, except, of course, journalists, teachers and men, whose business in life it is to read and write."

"It is not so in France. You will find that French workmen, though better educated *in the average* as far as elementary and technical education goes, do not read books, especially books of that kind. Now, though I put that question to you, I was aware of the answer. I have met many working men in England who were able to meet and hold their own in discussions of an academic character with men of leisure and education. But even if there were such men in Paris I should never hear of them. Being a priest cuts me off from most of them, and if not a priest, a man of the classes—a *bourgeois*—is separated by a wide gulf from the working-classes.

* "Imaginary conversations," W. S. Landor. Conversation between John Home and David Hume.

They never meet, they never discuss anything. They look upon each other as enemies, almost as much, nay, more than people of different nationalities. In England there is a gradation of classes. In France there are but two—rich and poor. And yet," he said, "I believe the only way to solve the social problems is for them to meet; if only to fully understand the state of each other's minds."

We had now reached the Terrace, and he kindly pointed out to us the many beautiful views of Paris to be seen from the summit, and also the old church of Meudon where Rabelais preached. We descended and saw his monument, and then left him at the station. Before leaving he gave me his card on which he wrote an introduction to a professor at a Catholic *Université populaire*. I have the card still, but I never made use of it, as I soon found that his words were too true, and that to attempt to come into any sort of contact with Catholicism, even from the point of view of study and experience—the only view I should ever wish to take—would be to cut myself off from those whose friendship and trust I most valued, and who I believe—in spite of this intolerance—are most worthy of comradeship.

On my return I told my friend M. Henri of my *rencontre* and he confirmed the statements. He had also been in England and understood the difference of conditions, but he begged of me not even to mention the matter to any of my prospective comrades. I could depend on his discreetness. I asked him how he accounted for the difference.

"History and national development," he said. "You have 200 sects in England, and when they enter politics at all they generally fight each other. Here the Catholic Church is one, and whatever isolated individuals may do, or wish to do, they must go with the body; and as a body they are against us politically and socially. And there are practically no intermediate bodies in which men of modified views may find a footing."

But, though I found that in the main they were right, I saw many curious anomalies in connection with this question, which I will not here relate as I am dealing fully with them in a later chapter.

CHAPTER II.

As a large part of this book deals with the conditions of workshop life, it will be well to acquaint the reader with the way in which the unemployed workmen proceed in order to get work. In England we are familiar with the three ordinary methods open to the skilled workmen in times of ordinary trade activity, viz. : To look in the press advertisement columns or to advertise for employment, to go round from shop to shop and ask to see the foreman or manager, or to use the employment register of trade unions. In the highly organised trades the latter method is almost the only one.

In France advertising is a farce. There are no serious advertisements for employment, and as most papers exist primarily for political purposes, none of them are worth anything as a medium for this object. The trade unions are, as yet, not sufficiently powerful or sufficiently organised to be of much direct use, though they are extremely useful for giving information to workmen as to where work is likely to be got. As for going round from shop to shop without introductions, it would be absolutely useless except in times of exceptional good trade. In fact, to the ordinary French workman in the skilled trades (engineering, building trades, &c.), the only way open is to use the influence of someone already inside the workshop or *chantier* where he wishes to try for employment. He may obtain the influence of a master or foreman to whom he has an introduction, or he may get one of the workmen to speak for him. The self-respecting workman almost always uses the latter

method. This to English workmen may seem to present some difficulty in the case of a stranger. But the difficulty is more apparent than real. Take a typical case: a young mechanic arrives in Paris from the Creusot, a large engineering district in Central France. He knows no one, perhaps, in the trade in Paris, or in those places where he did know someone he has failed to get work. He goes to the neighbourhood of a large works just before the dinner-hour, and seeks out the nearest café-restaurant, where he thinks it is likely that a number of workmen will go to *déjeuner*. There he will wait until the men arrive, when he will immediately accost them with the request:—

"Bonjour, camarades, y a-t-il moyen de se faire embaucher dans votre boîte?" (Is there any chance of getting work in your shop?)

He will immediately be told whether they are busy or not, and if there is a reasonable chance they will ply him with questions, when the following conversation, which in some form or other I have heard hundreds of times, may take place.

"What are you, fitter or turner?"

"Fitter."

"Where do you come from?"

"I come from the Creusot. I worked at Schneider's" (the great gun factory).

"From the Creusot! eh, Jules, there's a countryman of yours here. Come here."

It is a remarkable thing in the Parisian machine shops that more than 75 per cent. of the workmen are from the provinces.

The compatriots meet and reconnoitre and compare common acquaintances.

The upshot is that they will agree among themselves as to who is to ask the foreman for work for the new *copain* (chum). In the engineering, at any rate, and in most of the skilled trades he will be first asked if he is in the syndicat (trade union) and if not, he will be expected to join as soon as he gets work. The comrade

will then go with the new chum a little before the close of the dinner-hour and introduce him as an old comrade and a good workman. If the foreman is favourable, he will ask to see the certificates or testimonials, which it is compulsory for employers to give.* He will then ask the applicant how much *an hour* he expects. Of course, the comrade has already told him what to ask, and if there is an opening he will be told to start either at once or in the morning.

The other way of getting employment is to secure outside influence directly to the masters, foremen, or some important person in the office. Generally this is used by men having friends attached to the bourgeois class, or belonging to societies (musical, gymnastic, shooting) under the patronage of wealthy people, or more frequently by men still in touch with the Catholic Church. Indeed, there is one large electrical engineering firm in the neighbourhood of the Boulevard Vaugirard, where the surest way of obtaining employment is to be recommended to the lady of the head of the firm through the agency of the Sisters! Needless to say, this method is only resorted to by men whose skill is not sufficient to keep them in employment if got in by the regular methods, and in this firm these men form a group apart under the name of *protégés*, and are shunned by the other workmen. There are one or two *protégés* in almost every shop, and, rightly or wrongly, they are invariably credited with acting as secret police, if not actually of belonging to the Government secret police. There are many foreign skilled workmen in Paris, principally Germans, Belgians, Swiss, and a few Italians. I never met but one English workman in the engineering trades in Paris working as an ordinary workman in a workshop. Of course, several English and American firms send workmen over to special jobs, as during the Exhibition, or to erect special machinery, but I believe, apart from these, they are extremely rare. In the other trades: building trades,

* See Appendix. Facsimile of Certificates.

painting, woodworking, and especially in day labourers, outdoor or indoor, Englishmen are practically unknown. Certain callings, notably navvying (*terrassiers*) and outdoor labouring, are largely carried on by Italians and Belgians. On the other hand, French workmen rarely go abroad, and if they do, they soon return to France. (I speak, of course, of workmen in manual trades, and not of waiters, cooks, valets, &c., who are so numerous in England).

There is naturally some explanation for these facts, and though largely due to economic causes, of course, *i.e.*, differences in wages and hours, these are not the only reasons, especially in the cases of English and French workmen.

The mode of life, manners, customs, &c., are so different, that the English artisan can rarely adapt himself to them, though wealthy Englishmen, who can rule their life practically as they wish, find life in Paris and other parts of France so agreeable.

The economic condition of skilled workmen in France, taken in conjunction with their requirements in life, is pretty much the same as that of their English brothers. But the English workman who desires to change as little as possible his habits of dress, food or housing finds himself in a worse situation than at home, and *the same thing holds good* with the Frenchman who visits England with a view to working for a livelihood. Cheaper clothes, bigger houses than he wants, or cares to furnish, cheaper luxuries in the way of furniture, and certain articles of food, do not compensate him for the loss of his wine, his cheap fruit, and plentiful variety of vegetables exotic to England. The indoor comfort does not satisfy him for the loss of his cheap, clean and gay café-restaurant for which the English public-house or cocoa-rooms is no substitute. On the other hand, the Englishman and especially the English woman does not like the absence of his cherished household gods, for which there is no room in the majority of houses suitable to the purses of workmen, and which are too expensive

even if he had room ; and when the articles of his ordinary food are so dear, he does not feel grateful for what are to him cheap luxuries, *i.e.*, wine, three or four course dinners at the cafés, with a service of plates, napkins, and serviettes, to which he attaches no sort of importance, but which are, to French people, as dear as lace-curtains, antimacassars, and the front room suite to the heart of Mrs. John Smith of Oldham.

An important obstacle, however, to the English mechanic is the question of hours of labour, and the absence of the regular weekly Saturday half-day, and Sunday rest.

The wages in Paris are somewhat as follows :

Engineering Fitters, 70 to 80 centimes an hour.

„ Turners, 80 c. to 1 franc „

Building Trades, Carpenters, 70 c. to 80 c. „

„ Masons, 80 c. to 90 c. „

Labourers in all trades, 45 c. to 60 c. „

Government Factories and Works (Railways, Tobacco, &c.,) 50 c. an hour.

In the provinces they vary a great deal with the cost of living, though, taking the principal industrial districts such as the Roubaix and Lille district in the North, Reims in the East, Creusot, Bourges, and the Haute Saone in the Centre, and Marseilles in the South, they will be found to average about :—

Fitters 45 c. to 60 c.

Turners 50 to 70

Masons 45 to 50

Carpenters 45 to 50

Miners 50 to 70

(70 c. in the Pas de Calais).

Labourers from 30 c. an hour.

These differences correspond pretty much to the difference in the economic minimum of subsistence between Paris and these centres.

The average number of hours is 60 per week in the indoor workshops, but overtime is often worked, for which only the ordinary rate of pay is given, and Sunday

labour often takes place, though in a much less degree than formerly. Indeed, there is a growing number, especially in the iron trade, who refuse to do any work beyond the ten hours per day. As a matter of fact, this overtime is not compulsory as a rule, and the workmen who indulge in it do so from choice, for motives of pecuniary advantage, or for the purpose of currying favour with the employer.

Piecework is very common, especially with machine men. In the engineering trades in Paris, turners, planers, &c., usually work piecework under the following conditions: Suppose the rate for day work is 80 centimes (8d.) an hour, then that is the guaranteed minimum, and a tacit agreement exists that not more than, say, a franc an hour is to be earned. The price of the piece is based on these limits, and in the case of new pieces, naturally much discussion takes place on the price. If the men earned more than the recognised maximum, the price would soon be pulled down. On the other hand, if they earn less than the minimum, they are paid the full rate per hour as for day work.

The hours of work are generally from 7 a.m. to 12 noon, and from 1.30 p.m. to 6.30 p.m. Some places stop at 11 a.m. for *déjeuner*, whilst outdoor workers take their meal even earlier, but they have a short break in the afternoon when they repair to a neighbouring café to join in a bottle of wine and bread and cheese. The hours of outdoor workers, in fact, are altogether erratic. In the summer time they seem to work whenever it is daylight on week days, and almost always on Sunday mornings. But they very frequently take a Monday holiday. Half-holidays are often taken by men for various reasons—a local fête, a spell of hot weather, but above all, for a comrade's funeral. No one would dream of working when a former shopmate was being buried, even though they do not all go to the funeral. I shall have more to say later about funerals.

In the workshop there is much more freedom than, I believe, exists in English factories. Discipline is by no

means of a cast-iron character. If Maurice or Jules have a sudden idea which they wish to communicate to Henri at the other end of the shop, they go at once, without looking round to see where the foreman is, or pretending to go on business. A good quarter of an hour is lost every morning in shaking hands and passing salutations with comrades in all parts of the factory. To omit the handshake or the "*salut, camarades*," is a serious breach of good manners. In most workshops in France smoking is allowed, generally cigarette smoking, and it is no uncommon sight to see a workman stop to roll a cigarette and light it under the nose of the foreman. In some places, however, pipes only are allowed, as causing less danger of fire, and in a few of the larger and more modern places only, smoking is forbidden. But even in these it is winked at, or the men go into the yard or lavatories for five minutes or so several times during the day to smoke a cigarette, so that there is greater economy to the employer in permitting this privilege. In fact, provided there is no deliberate wasting of time or shirking of work, the workman has the utmost freedom in the workshop, and any attempt to limit this freedom is resented as deeply as an attack on the economic position of wages and hours. The French workman attaches an importance, altogether unrecognised in England, to such matters as personal freedom and treatment, courtesy of foremen and masters, and so on.

Wages are generally paid fortnightly, sometimes on alternate Saturdays, sometimes on the first and middle of each month. But workmen may at any time receive an advance, or *acompte*, on their wages. They usually draw one on the Saturday between the pay days, or on any day preceding a holiday.

One remarkable and pleasant feature of the French workmen is the good feeling and comradeship that exists between them, which is all the more noticeable in view of the bad blood and bitterness which they show towards masters, foremen, and their *protégés*. This comradeship

is not merely reserved for old friends. It is given to, and expected by, new chums as well as old. It is especially warm towards one who is "*un des nôtres*," that is, "one of ours," viz.: a member of the syndicat, or one holding political ideas in common with the mass of workmen. When a man is looking for work and waits at a restaurant for the purpose of getting someone to introduce him, one of the first questions asked is, "*As-tu mangé ?*" (Have you eaten?)—the use of the familiar *tu*—thou—is general among workmen. There is no hesitation in answering negatively, and in accepting the proffered hospitality if required, and I may say this is rarely abused. The moment a new comrade is installed he is very soon visited by all and sundry to exchange names, give explanations, and generally to make him feel at home. He is besieged by requests to come to this or that particular café for his *déjeuner*, if he does not go home, or for his *apéritif* if he does. He will also be asked by those with whom he elects to go—generally those whose influence got him work—whether he has money to pay for his eating until pay-day. If not, they will either lend him some, or give their word to the *bistrot* (restaurant keeper) for his credit. This open-hearted comradeship is extended to the foreigner as well as to the native, and I have known of a case where two men, one a German, the other a Frenchman, came together to ask for work, and they decided to ask for the German first, because being a foreigner he would probably have greater difficulty in getting in and greater hardships in remaining out of work. This, of course, is conditional on the stranger showing that he is in harmony with their class-conscious ideas, and that he will adhere to the recognised standard of wages and hours. Naturally there are *chauvinists* among workmen, but my experience is that they are very rare, and that in view of their small numbers they keep their ideas to themselves, and show them only on occasions when they can do so with safety.

The frankness with which they talk of money matters is startling to the Englishman accustomed to abnormal

privacy in his financial affairs. If a workman is temporarily hard up (this often happens about quarter day when the rent is due) he will straightaway call across the bench or the café table to any comrade he thinks better provided: "I say, Jules, lend me 50 francs, will you?" Jules will at once lend it if he has it, and if not will ask the other comrades to make up what is short of the sum required. I have known on pay-days just before the *terme* many large sums (for workmen) change hands without any sort of acknowledgment being given.

This comradeship was also shown towards workmen who were in misfortune, ill, or disabled. Scarcely a pay-day went by, in the workshop I was connected with, without some collection taking place for some workman in want, some comrade ill, or some strike in Paris or elsewhere. Sometimes several took place together, and generally one might count a franc a fortnight for this purpose. The most general object of the collection was for a *couronne* or funeral wreath as a token of sympathy with a dead comrade, or the death of a comrade's wife, parent, child, relative, or even *neighbour*. Indeed, it was astonishing how far along the line of relationship this form of sympathy extended. One of my comrades told me very gravely that the only connections exempted from the receipt of these tokens of respect were *mothers-in-law* and *concierges*!

The comradeship takes other and more practical forms. I have found that they were exceedingly ready to put a new chum into the routine of the work, and to give assistance to a less skilful comrade. There are exceptions, of course, but I speak of the general feeling, which is widespread enough to be very noticeable to one who has experienced the reserve—to use a mild word—with which the new comer is often received in England.

It may be admitted as a set-off against the *general* comradeship that private friendships are not so common or so deep as in Anglo-Saxon countries.

CHAPTER III.

Leaving the workshop and the details of the life inside, it will be interesting to look at the French workman as we meet him outside. Naturally, the best time to see him and distinguish him as a workman is at meal times, and on his way home after leaving the workshop. The mid-day meal or *déjeuner* is really the first meal of the day. The glass of black coffee and small roll taken before 7 a.m. is really not a meal, and, in fact, in summer, it is omitted altogether, so that many of them go to the mid-day meal actually fasting. But it is an event. Of all the people in the world, the Frenchman, of all grades, takes his meals most seriously, the workman most of all. Unless they live very near the factory they do not go home to dinner, as an English workman would call this meal. Neither do they, on any consideration, bring their food from home to eat in the workshop. The only method which seems at all practicable to them is to eat at a restaurant, and these are both numerous and good.

About five minutes before leaving-time, the workman divests himself of the blue overalls, or aprons, with which they all protect their clothing at work, washes his hands and awaits the signal. He then makes his way to his restaurant in company with his chosen comrades. For at least eight or nine months in the year he takes a place outside on the terrace, or in the *bosquets*, or garden, if there is one. Here he will sit in his accustomed place looking for his *serviette*, with his number on the ring, which the proprietor has carefully set out for him. He is generally on good terms with the *bistrot*, but often quizzes him as to his being too *commerçant*, and not free

enough with the bottles of extra good wine with which he occasionally treats his customers. As the comrades who go home or to other restaurants pass, the general salutation is: "*Bon appetit!*"—" *Merci, toi aussi!*" ("Good appetite to you!"—"Thanks, the same to you"). The first question of the landlord or the waiter is: "What wine to-day, M. Jules, white or red? White, *bon*; a demi-litre, very good; bread, two sous worth (1d.), *très-bien*." That is the absolutely essential to every meal, whatever else follows—bread and wine—and while this is being served, the customer studies diligently the *menu*, makes his choice, and passes it on to his neighbour. At last the choice is made and then begins a regular volley of orders to the *patron* or the waiter: "*Un bouillon!*" "*Un maigre aux pommes!*" "*Un lardé aux pommes!*" "*Un veau roti!*" "*Une blanquette de veau!*" "*Veau jardinière!*" "*Lapin sauté!*"*

This will continue through the meal as one course after another is disposed of. First the solid portion of the dinner—meat of some sort always. Then the vegetables, one or two lots according to the appetite or purse of the customer. After, a salad or cheese, and finally a dessert of fruit; and at last the plates are cleared, coffee is served, black and in tall glasses, with or without a *petit verre*, or small glass of cognac brandy, marc, or other spirit, cigarettes are rolled and lit, and they sit back at peace with the world and themselves. In all the meal takes about an hour, that is from sitting down to the coffee; there is no hurry, no bolting of food, but a steady appreciation of each detail in a healthy, sane, and satisfying meal. During the meal the men discuss the topics of the day, the events of the workshop, political questions, the newspapers, the latest article by Jaurès, or the coming meeting of the syndicat. They rarely get up from their places until time to go back to work. Just before this, however, the *patron* (landlord) comes round to make the *addition* of each customer's repast. Some

* See Appendix, *menus* of meals in workmen's restaurants.

pay each day, but the general rule is to pay at the week-end. On Saturday, dinner-time is the occasion for much jollity and joking in view of the coming weekly rest. There is one standing piece of amusement. Clean *serviettes* are given every week on Mondays, and after each meal the customer rolls it up and inserts it in the ring bearing his number. But on Saturdays, there is no necessity for this, and any unfortunate customer who forgets this and rolls his as usual is immediately called to account with great glee, and fined a bottle of wine for his table. Sometimes one mischievous wight will insert another one's serviette in its accustomed place, and then try and bluff him into the belief that he has done it himself in an absent-minded moment. Every Monday the landlord treats his customers to the after-dinner coffee and cognac, or to a bottle of good wine to each table of six or so.

On the advent of a new customer brought by workmen he is also expected to treat his clients in this way. When the meal hour is over they get up leisurely, and go back to work, preparing a fresh cigarette on the way.

Coming out of the workshop at the close of the day's work is also the occasion for those little incidents and scenes which seem trivial in themselves, but which are good indications of the general characteristics of a class or a nation.

The factories and workshops of Paris are all confined to the districts around the circumference of the city, both within and without the barriers. They stretch in a chain from Courcelles Lavallois on the north-west, passing around, *viâ* the north, to Grenelle on the south-west, broken only on the west by the residential districts of Auteuil and the Champs-Élysées, bordering on the Bois de Boulogne.

It will be just as well to make a note here of the fact that industrial Paris, with a few economic differences, is typical of industrial France generally. The principal differences I shall have occasion to dilate on; but in all essential points my experience of artisan life in the great industrial districts, confirmed by the opinion of those

who have had opportunities of knowing, is that Paris typifies them all in a far different manner to the way London typifies the characteristics of the northern or midland English workman. This is all the more so when it is borne in mind, what I have already said, that 75 per cent. of the men in workshops are provincial born. Indeed, in one large factory I know of in Grenelle, one of my friends was known as *le Parisien* to distinguish him from others of the same very common name, he being the only one who was of Parisian birth and parentage. It is the ambition of many of the workmen to save a little for old age and retire into their native *campagne* or city, on a little farm or a little business. Hence the vast number of young unmarriedmen in Paris.

To return to our workmen just released from their day's toil. Out they come, repeating the hand-shake of the morning and the "*Bonsoir, Paul, à demain !*" to those who are not going in their direction. Gradually they separate into little groups, often the same groups who dine together, and who go home the same way. Generally they will stop once on their way to drink an *apéritif* or glass of something to create an appetite—a superfluity, one would think. It is extremely rare to see men get more than one glass even on pay-days, and as a rule the men pay in their turns, one each day. It is considered very bad comradeship to drink alone (*boire en Suisse*) and I believe the majority would rather pay out of their turn than miss it. Many of them return home by the circular railway, sometimes an hour's journey, and wile away the time by reading the paper, joking, or singing Socialist songs. There is the utmost freedom of intercourse, as no workmen who have exchanged two words together count themselves strangers. A new face among the travellers by any particular train is the signal for exchange of courtesies and of information as to trade or calling, employers, residence and other details. It is in these rides on the workmen's trains that one gets many side-lights on the state of mind of the workman on various questions.

An incident that occurred during the height of the Boer war, and of which I was the witness, will show this. An English workman, a mechanic, was employed in Paris for the time being installing some machinery in a firm in Menilmontant. He could both speak and read French. Living in Vaugirard, he had to take the train to Menilmontant at 6.30 a.m. The same train carried a number of boys who were serving their apprenticeship to engineering at the Ecole Diderot (a technical school on the Boulevard de Belleville). The Englishman and the boys got down at the same station, and the boys, probably by his English mackintosh and other details, recognised his nationality. Sympathising as they did with the Boer, but most probably in a spirit of mischief, they at once assailed him with cries of "*Vivent les Boers!*" "*Vive Kruger!*" The Englishman turned round to reply, but before he could do so several workmen had stepped in and were volubly remonstrating with the boys for this exhibition of feeling. "Do you not see he is a workman like ourselves? He did not make the war. He is one of those who will have to pay for it. Besides, look! he is reading the *Petite République*." (He had that paper in his hand.) "If you want to shout, go and shout at the English milord on the Madeleine. Or, better, leave that to the *patriotards*. Allons! camarade," said one to the Briton, "come and have a coffee with us." The whole feeling of the boys was changed towards the Englishman, and, as a matter of fact, he who had suffered considerably for taking a part in the peace agitation in England felt it somewhat hard that he should also suffer vicariously for his warlike countrymen at the hands of the foreign sympathisers with the Boers. For several nights afterwards the boys made amends by accompanying him home to the strains of the "*Internationale*," and amid copious invitations to take the *apéritif*. This incident, and the spirit it evoked, indicates the general feeling of the French workman during the Boer war. This feeling was generally misrepresented entirely by the English press at the time, probably because the opinions of a

small part of the population—the *boulevardiers* and idlers of the cafés round the Bourse—was taken for the whole. That the feeling of the majority of French *working men* was sympathetic to the Boers is undeniable; that it was *at any time during the war* anti-English is not only deniable, it is absolutely false. But, at the same time, the majority of them had some curious misconceptions about opinion in England. First of all they were quite sure that the war was caused by a conspiracy of rich men co-operating with a bourgeois Government for the purpose of getting possession of the gold mines. They were equally sure that the war was *very unpopular* with the mass of working men in England, whom they imagined to be only imperfectly enfranchised and represented in Parliament. The more educated among them, following the splendid lead of Jaurès and de Pressensé in the Socialist press, held that, though the war was wrong, yet it was no more wrong than the war in China, in which France and Germany and other countries had infringed the rights of nations; and also that to indulge in recriminations against Englishmen was to play into the hands of the English jingo. There was another all-sufficient reason to most of them for not being anti-English, viz., that the Clerical press was violently Anglophobe, and Clericalism was to them in all things absolutely and irretrievably wrong.

The misconception as to the attitude of English workmen is easily explainable: the only section of English working people with whom they came in contact were the members of Socialist and Trade Union organisations. The only press in England that received any sort of attention from the papers read by French workmen were the organs of these bodies and the few dailies sympathetic towards them. The resolutions of the International Congress held in 1900 condemning the war, and the public actions of various leaders of Trade Union and Socialist bodies, were taken as representative of the views of the whole body of English workmen.

Those who feel disposed to criticise this perfectly natural ignorance of the true state of affairs will do well to remember that it is this very misconception which has made it so easy, now the war is over, to forget the past, and made possible the present *rapprochement* between the two countries which is fraught with such promise of good results for humanity at large.

I feel it a duty to say that, except the above incident, I have never seen or heard, during the whole time of the war, any sign or word which could be construed into anything which would make an Englishman or woman feel uncomfortable. My wife and I experienced from all classes of French working people, during that period, unvarying kindness and courtesy. Much was made in England of the cartoons ridiculing the English rulers and generals. That these cartoons existed I do not doubt—there is a public for anything in all countries—but that they were generally bought, or even offered for sale, in working-class districts is so untrue, that though constantly out and moving about, and both of us being omnivorous readers, we rarely even saw one. But then we moved among the real French people, and not among stock-jobbers and the demi-monde!

Kruger's visit to Paris caused very little excitement among the working people, very few of them even taking the trouble to go and see him either at the balcony of the Hotel Scribe or on his way through the city. I went alone, failing to find a comrade who would bestir himself to go. They all knew the futility of his mission. One of them put it very cynically: "What can he do by asking the tiger to help him against the lion? He is a sheep, like China, and has got to be fleeced by our rulers, who are all in the swim together."

The crowd outside was described by various English papers as enormous. It was certainly a big crowd, but compared with the Labour demonstrations which take place at Père Lachaise in May, or at other times when the people are interested, it was simply a case of "two. 101

or three gathered together," a motley gathering of strollers from the boulevards. They were, of course, very enthusiastic, and demanded salutations to the old man on the balcony from the passengers on the omnibuses.

He passed next day on the Place de la République during the dinner-hour on his way to the Gare de Lyon. I was getting my *déjeuner* in the Rue de l'Entrepot, a hundred yards away, and could not induce a single one of some twenty workmen who were with me to accompany me so far. Again I went alone.

I do not mean by this that they did not sympathise with the Boer cause; most certainly they did. There were two special reasons why they did not go. First, fond as they are of a *spectacle*, or a display, the French are not sightseers by nature; the sight of Englishmen and Americans tearing through the world, Baedeker in hand, to visit everything and see everything *notorious*, fills them with amazement. Secondly, they knew that the manifestations in honour of Paul Kruger were engineered by *La Patrie*, and similar chauvinist journals, and were meant more as "anti-English" than as pro-Boer. They could not conscientiously make counter-demonstrations, so they stayed away.

The news of peace, on the other hand, was received by all the workmen I knew with every manifestation of joy. Some of them were wise enough to see that the prolongation of hostilities was as disastrous to French trade as it was to English; but, apart from this, the papers most read by the workmen have for many years made a crusade against all war, and the sentiment for universal peace is remarkably strong. Indeed, it is not too much to say that this feeling originated with the people themselves, and that the papers only reflect the sentiment. As a witness to this, I may call into requisition the most popular songs amongst workpeople: the "Internationale," and even the "Garmagnole," with its crude mixture of idealism, vulgarity, and the spirit of

revenge, or wild justice. The first and most popular verse runs :

Ah ! s'ils avaient le sens commun,
Tous les peuples n'en feraient qu'un !
Au lieu de s'égorger, Ils iraient tous manger
Dans la même gamelle,*
Vive le son, etc.

(Oh, if they had only common sense,
All the nations would make but one,
Instead of butchering each other, They would all
Come and eat together, around the same table.*)

The other songs breathe a similar sentiment in finer language and divested of the other violent and objectionable matter. This is one of the real ideas behind the French Revolution in its earlier stages, now coming once more to the surface, after having been almost smothered in the legacy of militarism left by the first Napoleon. It is one of the most hopeful signs in France to-day, and those who, like myself, remember the bitter animosity existing against Germany, even so late as the eighties, will appreciate the change that has taken place when they read the famous anti-revanche speech made in the Chamber by Jaurès, the most eloquent and most trusted representative of the French democracy.

NOTE.—An interesting side-light is thrown on the development of the International idea by a resolution of the *Union des Mécaniciens* in a meeting I attended as a member, condemning the proposed Old Age Pensions law, because one of its clauses excluded foreign workmen residing in France from participating in the benefits, though they would have to contribute by deductions from their wages.

* Literally, *gamelle* is the tin canteen strapped to the soldier's knapsack.

CHAPTER IV.

French workmen, as a general rule, spend their evenings in as many and varied ways as their English fellows, with, perhaps, one great difference in the case of married men, who most frequently are accompanied in their relaxations by the wife and family. Of course, the cafés are the resorts most frequented. A neighbour of mine used to spend his summer evenings invariably in the following way: dinner with his family over, he and his wife, mostly accompanied by their son, a boy of sixteen, strolled up the boulevard running around the City within the grassy mounds known as fortifications. They would probably meet other friends on the way, and would sit for a time on a seat under the splendid avenue of false acacias and Oriental plane trees, until, probably, one would invite the others across to the terrace of a neighbouring café to take a bottle of wine or the coffee. There they would sit talking over the news of the day, while the young man would have a game at *tonneau* with any comrades about. They would stay until about nine or ten, when they would get up and leisurely stroll home another way through a street of well-lighted shops, when Madame would make a few purchases for next day's housekeeping. Twice a week, on Wednesdays and Sundays, they would vary it by going together to the lecture or entertainment at the *Université populaire*, about which more anon. And thus, with the exception of occasional fêtes and ceremonial events, they would pass on year after year, in the winter time substituting for the walk half-an-hour's chat in the cosy café across the way. Not a very exciting existence, truly, and not reflecting

much of the giddy life of the gayest capital in the world. In fact, I may say that in whatever other way the French workman spends his evenings, the *last* thing he thinks about is to go into the City to seek out the many halls and places of amusement that flourish there. To live in Grenelle, or Levallois, or Montrouge, the life of the average inhabitant there is to be as far removed from the Paris known to the English tourist as the Norfolk peasant is from Piccadilly.

The young men living away from home—they are very numerous in Paris—divide their time between the *café chantants* and the many political and other meetings. Many young artisans devote their leisure to improving themselves in technical classes.

The most remarkable things, however, in the way they spent their evenings are, first, the absence of drunkenness, and second, the absence of any form of organised games. There is no cricket or football, nor anything to take their place. A few gymnastic, shooting and musical societies flourish, mainly under wealthy patronage, but only attracting a small number comparatively.

Open-air concerts are frequent in the many public gardens, and are well attended.

Generally, however, and especially in winter, French people go to bed very early, unless there is some special reason for staying up, such as a political or trade union meeting, or a lecture. But these take place very often on Saturdays or Sundays. They rise very early in the mornings; in the working-class districts, shops and markets are all open and set out by seven; bakers' shops and cafés are in full swing one or two hours earlier. It is a very common sight in the summer to see workmen sat on the benches of the boulevards reading their papers a full hour before the time for beginning work.

I have spoken of the *Universités populaires*. This movement is of very recent origin, and may be roughly described as a secular version of our London University Settlements, such as Toynbee Hall. There are naturally

very wide differences to suit them to the requirements and tastes of French workmen. But they are similar in this respect, that their aim is to promote a wider culture among workpeople, and to provide a medium of communication between them and such members of the intellectual and educated classes as are in sympathy with the proletariat and their aspirations. They are inferior to the English institutions in many respects: *e.g.*, the somewhat one-sided nature of the majority of lectures and a lack of continuity in the educational side.

They are superior on the other hand in that there is a complete absence of any sort of patronage, or appearance of class condescension, and that they cater in a freer spirit to the recreative side of the movement.

They were much frequented by working men and their families. The one I attended was very flourishing, and as it was typical of many others, I cannot do better than describe it in detail.

The institution was run conjointly with a co-operative restaurant and café, or to be more correct, the restaurant was a separate institution run on co-operative lines, lending its premises gratis to the *Université*. Apart from the dining room and café there was a large lecture room, and several small rooms used as reading-rooms, &c., and a large yard neatly gravelled, containing a few trees and some arbours with chairs and tables. This yard was very useful for children's fêtes, and games, and, of course, in the summer was used as dining-hall for the hundred or so workmen who ate there.

On almost every evening of the week classes were held in various subjects: languages, science, history, &c., and practices of the dramatic or musical clubs connected with the institution. Twice a week, on Wednesdays and Sundays, lectures were given by some of the most learned and brilliant men in Paris. On Saturday evenings an entertainment was given by the dramatic section, and by the excellent choral society.

The membership fee was very small, 50 centimes a month, and all the services of lecturers, musicians,

dramatists, and teachers, were given free. On special occasions fêtes or galas were held, and in the winter dances, well-conducted and decorous. The whole atmosphere was cheerful, free, and homely, more redolent of pastoral simplicity than of the common idea of Parisian frivolity and artificiality.

The dramatic and musical entertainments were of a very high order. The former generally consisted of representations from Molière and other classical dramatists, and also of little plays and sketches written specially for them by some of the best modern playwrights, many of them bearing directly on social questions or features of modern social life. One of the most successful and popular was a piece in five acts, entitled "The Weavers" translated from the German (written by Hauptman). This play is, I believe, translated into English also. Parts of Shakespeare's plays were also given occasionally. All French people are born actors, and they were coached and occasionally assisted by well-known professional actors and actresses. I count these evenings among the most enjoyable of my recollections. The choral singing was also good, and the lady who officiated as conductor was the winner of the Grand Prix du Conservatoire, a high musical distinction. Though they occasionally sung extracts from Wagner and other foreign composers, their chief accomplishment was the restoring to favour of old French melodies, and particularly the music of Glück, the famous originator of the French school of music, and composer of some of the earliest operas. The rendering of "Orpheus" by this choir was a genuine musical treat.

As to the lectures, the following list of names will give some idea of their character and nature : Anatole France, Pierre Labori, Flammarion, the astronomer, Professeur Poirier, Victor Charbonnel, Francis de Pressensé, Jean Jaurès, Maurice Deherme, Urbain Gohier, &c.

There was one great fault to which I have already referred : there was no idea of sequence or continuity in the lectures, which were all separate and distinct. There were no courses of several lectures on any definite branch

of study. Several of the lectures, especially those on religious or social questions, partook far more of the nature of propaganda speeches on freethought or Socialism, than of dispassionate scientific inquiries into these questions. One of them, I remember, disappointed me very much. It was the "Origins of Religion," and the lecturer was an ex-priest. Though I knew that the lecture would be anti-religious in both tone and matter, I expected that it would be a calm and scientific, if popular, exposition of the latest researches into the origin and development of the religious idea among primitive races, somewhat on the lines of Edward Clodd's "Childhood of Religions." Instead of which, it was simply a long diatribe against the existing Catholic religion, an exposure of its methods of imposing on a credulous people. Fear, according to the lecturer, was the whole and sole origin of the religious idea, the various forms of religion being consciously invented by unscrupulous men for the purpose of exploiting the people by working on their fears. The whole speech was simply an appeal to the prejudices of the meeting, and though it may have been counted as a good polemic against the Catholic Church, it had absolutely no scientific or educational value, and was unworthy of an institution, however humble, bearing the name of university. And yet the lecturer has a high reputation for learning, both in France and in other countries.

On the whole, though, the lectures were good, and I cannot speak too highly of the work of Anatole France, Francis de Pressensé, and Jean Jaurès in connection with these institutions.

I was pressed into service in one of them for an English class of some eight or ten engineers, whose great ambition was to be able to address John Burns in his native tongue when they attended the next Trades Union Congress. I have nothing but pleasant recollections of our attempts to put the "Vicar of Wakefield" into a French dress. The translation into French words was only a minor difficulty compared with that of conveying

to the French minds correct ideas of the simple manners and homely sentiments of English pastoral life a hundred years ago.

In writing of these *Universités populaires*, I ought to say something of the relations of the intellectual class to the workers' movements. I have already mentioned the great separation of the working classes from the wealthy people generally; but though professional men such as doctors, lawyers, and professors in the colleges, and students in these professions are drawn largely from the classes, there is a distinct community of feeling and sentiment between them and the working people.

The intellectual revolt of the present age against old ideas and established institutions seems to have driven the student class and their leaders to make common cause with the workers in their revolt against economic institutions. Many of them would claim that one is only the reflection of the other.

The supporters of the established order, and the advocates of reaction towards old-time social and political customs find their support in Paris in the employing and commercial classes, aided by the military and religious orders and the remnants of old French nobility. They are backed up in the country by the landowning and peasant proprietor class, though by the latter in a rapidly decreasing ratio.

The *Universités populaires* receive much help from these intellectual classes, and also from some of the best known members of the dramatic and musical professions. There is, however, a total absence of toadyism on one side, or patronage on the other. They are received and do what is required of them as a mere matter of course just as one workman might for another.

Periodically, these institutions throughout Paris and environs combine for a joint effort. On one of these occasions the Theatre Antoine was engaged for a concert and dramatic display in which several of the foremost actors and musicians gave their services, while the principal item was a lecture by Jaurès on Zola's just-

published book, "Le Travail." The whole business lasted from 2 p.m. to 6.30 on a Sunday afternoon, and was followed with intense interest by a crowded audience of working men and women.

I have dealt with the way in which the élite of the working classes spend their evenings and spare time. There is, of course, a large mass to whom this educational movement does not appeal.

The cafés get a large share of these, and the nightly games of cards for a bottle of wine or glasses of coffee form their principal attraction, along with that staple French amusement—ceaseless chatter about anything or nothing. There is very little real gambling, and betting on races is very small, though I am of opinion that the development of cycle and motor races has considerably increased this habit.

Sunday is, of course, the day *par excellence* to see the working people at their best. It must be borne in mind that for eight months in the year, generally, the weather permits of much open-air life. The remaining period—the winter season—is a time to be got over as patiently as possible, to go to bed early, and to keep indoors, with a few relaxations such as I have already referred to. It is only in the finer weather that they may really be said to live.

The provincial workman who comes to Paris to dwell, soon exhausts the attractions of the city. A few visits to the museums and art galleries, a few evenings among the cabarets of Montmartre, a Sunday or so in the Jardin des Plantes, and a pilgrimage to the Mur des Fédérés in Père Lachaise cemetery, these pretty nearly complete their survey of the splendid capital. They then fall back on the attractions of their *quartier* and of the country around Paris.

Sunday morning in the Parisian faubourgs presents a very animated appearance. From 7 a.m., and even earlier, the markets are in full swing, and crowds of people are walking about, some to make purchases, others simply to meet friends and acquaintances to take the

apéritif together. Many of the women who work during the week use the Sunday morning for washing in the *lavoirs*, while the mén go round the market to make provision for the *déjeuner* and for the afternoon's pic-nic in the neighbouring forests of Clamart or Vincennes. Some, of course, more fortunately situated, are already off, and from early morning until afternoon the boats on the Seine, and the tramways leading out of the city, are crowded with happy families, many of them loaded with provisions. By noon the markets are finished, the week's washing is hanging safely locked up in the drying-houses of the district washhouse, and preparations are being made for departure. The two great resorts of the working population of Paris are the woods of Clamart-Meudon, and those of Vincennes. From Grenelle, the former are reached by the tramways for 15 centimes (1½d.), and the latter by the splendid service of steamboats for 20 centimes (2d.), a distance of about ten miles.

I will try to give a picture of a typical outing to Clamart such as I have taken part in many a time. We started about eight in the morning, after having had the usual light Sunday breakfast of *café au lait* and rolls. Our *concierge* had just announced that M. and Mme. Bertaux, a young married couple of our acquaintance, were waiting for us below. We descended, and found them well-provisioned for the *déjeuner sur l'herbe*. We were unprovided, but that made no matter: food is plentiful at Clamart. We took the tram and were landed into the very edge of the great forest, the village spreading around a large green. Hundreds of families and groups were about making their final preparations for the inner man. Most of the women carried baskets tucked in with white serviettes, the men had nets with bottles of wine slung from their shoulders, or large stone gourds containing the same liquid, while the children divided the responsibilities of yards of loaves of bread. We made our provision of solid comforts and of cider, for which the place is famous, and penetrated the woods. We soon arrived at what our friends thought a suitable

spot, around an open space occupied by scores of people, mostly family groups.

Here we deposited our burdens, and begun to look around for means of enjoyment. It was an easy matter to get into conversation with one of the groups, and before long the younger people were engaged in various games; ball, leap-frog, &c., in which young women joined, under the watchful eyes of their *mamans*, of course, while the older people sat around and commenced the usual light and pleasant chatter suitable to such occasions. Many people, young and old, were industriously gathering flowers for bouquets or *couronnes* (wreaths). At last the time for *déjeuner* came, the white table-cloths were spread on the ground and the baskets emptied. Some had brought whole services of crockery, including salad-bowls, in which they prepared succulent dishes of lettuce and herbs which they had picked up on the spot. The meal over we were invited by one of the groups to partake of the indispensable coffee which they had made. Several groups had made fires and were engaged in preparing coffee also. In the afternoon the games recommenced, some went on exploration tours in the woods while others were attracted to an enclosure where a band was playing dance music. One great feature about the whole business was the presence of people of all ages. To the people who share the very common but foolish idea that there is no family life in France, these outings would be a great surprise: the *unit* of all such gatherings is so evidently a family and not a set of unrelated individuals. The families come together and go away together, and though social intercourse with utter strangers is free in the course of the day's enjoyment, no one presumes on that freedom to the extent of entering into more intimate acquaintance with any family. The evening meal about six or seven will probably be taken on the front of one of the numerous cafés around the green and in the village. Many traverse the wood and dine at Meudon in order to come back a different way. Most of them go home after dinner, but some remain to finish the evening in dancing,

especially if there is a fête in the village. It is wonderful what a transformation a few fairy lamps can make in such a sylvan scene. The French are very fond of nature, but not wild and unadorned. They like it better as an artistic background to their human efforts in pleasant decoration.

Fête-days are enjoyed pretty much in the same way as the Sundays. If it is a longer holiday than one day they may go further afield, say, to Sceaux-Robinson, though that is more frequented by the student and the small bourgeois class. Of course, certain fêtes are celebrated in a time-honoured manner. On the great national holiday of the 14th of July, the general trend is towards Longchamps and the great military review, though the class-conscious workmen have of late years boycotted this show, as being a glorification of militarism. In the evening the fireworks and torch-light processions which take place all over France are the main attraction, while during several evenings of the fête every square, public place, or street corner is turned into an *al fresco* ball-room. The other fêtes are the carnivals of Shrove-Tuesday and Mid-Lent, famous for confetti-throwing and masked balls, and the processions organised by the markets, washhouses, and students; Easter, Whitsuntide, are celebrated pretty much as in England; Christmas, in which the workman celebrates the *réveillon rouge* or red watch-night and carousal in opposition to the clerical watch-night service; the *Fête des Morts* (all Souls), when the people visit the cemeteries to deposit wreaths on the graves of the dead; and the *Jour de l'An* or New Year's day. This last is a great day for the children. They are taken by their parents into the city, along the grand boulevards, lined for the time with stalls displaying innumerable toys and piles of gingerbread and barley-sugar. There are lots of minor fêtes and local fairs, all of which are duly observed by the working people of Paris.

CHAPTER V.

We have now had a survey of the lives of the workers as they appear outside and in the factories, and I will attempt to show in the following pages their home life.

I have already made mention of the quarterly system of house renting and given a description of an *hotel meublé*. I do not intend, however, that this description should be taken as a typical Parisian *hotel meublé*. It was a fair example of the lodgings to be had in industrial towns in the provinces. The Parisian variety is as a rule not a very pleasant place of habitation, though, of course, they vary very much according to price and locality. The sanitary conveniences are, as a rule, unspeakable. Many of the hotels are overcrowded, and on the whole they are below the standard of the furnished lodgings inhabited by the London artisan of the same class. But on the other hand, even the worst of them in the poorest quarters of the Faubourg St. Antoine are immeasurably above the cheap "doss-houses" of London, Manchester and other large English cities. The people who inhabit these *hotel meublés* may be classed as follows: 1st, families arriving in Paris between the *termes*, or unable to find money to engage a flat and furnish; 2nd, married people without children, where both husband and wife work; 3rd, single young men whose families are not in Paris; 4th, in the worse variety, such parts of the population as may be classed as the social residuum, *i.e.*, prostitutes and people living on them, criminals, &c.

In the first kind, generally of a superior order, there will be convenience for a sort of home life, cooking at home, and so on, and the people in them are often saving

money or buying articles of household use ready for furnishing a more permanent home.

The second and third category are generally simply furnished bedrooms, of varying quality, sometimes connected with cafés, sometimes like private lodging-houses. The people living in them generally eat at restaurants. The same thing applies to the fourth, which are only different in degree and locality.

One form of lodging is absolutely unknown in Paris, and indeed, throughout industrial France, viz. : lodgings with a private family, either with or without board. (I except, of course, the many *Pensions de famille* in the centre, catering for English and American visitors.)

The hire of rooms in the hotels is by the day, the week, or the month. A young artisan will pay from 20 to 30 francs a month for his *chambre*.

Married people who are settled down in a district, and especially when the husband is the sole breadwinner, take the first opportunity of going into a *logement* or flat. In most parts of Paris these are built in blocks of from three to six storeys, each storey generally containing on the same landing two separate tenements. The price, in the working-class districts, varies from 200 to 400 francs a year. The average mechanic with a wife, and say, two children, will usually pay 300 to 350 francs. The price decreases with the number of storeys from the first above the ground floor, which is the most sought after.

The ground floor is often reserved for the *concierge*, an official who acts as doorkeeper, rent-collector, and landlord's agent generally. The lighting and cleaning of the staircases is also a part of his duties.

For 320 francs per year, paid quarterly *in advance*, an artisan may get two large rooms, a small kitchen (containing a stove, sink, water-tap, and gas), water-closet, and good-sized clothes-closet. This is the exact description of some tenements in Grenelle inhabited by artisans. There were three storeys above the ground-floor, and the inhabitants were the families of people in the following situations : One clerk and one bank employee, on the

first* floor; two mechanics, one a fitter, the other a turner, on the second floor; a joiner and a labourer, on the top floor. The prices were: 340 francs first floor, 328 francs second floor, 300 third floor.

The *conciierge* inhabited the ground floor, and in the yard, whereon the staircase opened, there were several cheaper tenements built in two storeys only. Each tenant had a key to the main gate giving on the street, but in many houses after a stated time (11 p.m. generally), the bell must be rung, and the gate, or front door, opened by an automatic arrangement from the *conciierge's* lodge.

With one exception, they all had families, the largest family being three children and father and mother, and in all these families the living-room was also a bedroom.

The sanitary conveniences—water, sink and water-closet—were exceptionally good in this house, and, indeed, in all the newer houses great advances have been made on the past unsatisfactory conditions. My experience is that joint use of water-closets by two or more families, as is common in many old houses, is conducive to all kinds of evil results. The water supply on the landing of some houses, instead of inside each tenement, is also the cause of dirt and discord.

The usual mode of furnishing by an average artisan is very simple. The floor is generally waxed, so that there are no carpets, except, perhaps, a small piece by each bed. I will give a minute description of the interior of one house inhabited by four persons: father, mother, girl of five, boy of fifteen (one child, who would have been ten, had died). This house was typical of hundreds, and may be taken as the average interior of the steady artisan class:—

KITCHEN: Cooking-stove, coal box, shelves and hooks (these were fixtures belonging to house), wood chair and small buffet (wood cupboard to contain food, &c.). The crockery was very elaborate, consisting of a full supply

* First floor (*1er étage*) always means the one above the ground floor.

of soup, dinner, dessert plates, glasses, and all table requisites. The utensils went far to show what an important item cookery is in the French household; the coffee-pot and coffee-mill were, of course, in evidence.

LIVING-ROOM: Round table (four-legged), five rush-bottomed chairs, cupboard, looking-glass and overmantel, and four-poster bed. The hearth contained no grate, but in winter a stove is fitted in.

BEDROOM: Large four-poster bed, child's cot, two chairs, dressing table, arm chair, and wardrobe, one or two chests. On the walls a few coloured prints, and a large portrait in oils; on the shelf a few ornaments and a lamp.

There is a large cellar under the house, with compartments for each tenant, and used for keeping the wine-barrel and the fuel.

This is practically the whole of the furniture. The beds are very elaborate, and are made up of a wood frame, spring mattress, one mattress of *varech* (a sort of seaweed), one of wool flocks, feather pillows, linen sheets, wool blankets, the whole surmounted by a large red eiderdown pillow. The furniture is of a very plain character, and a home described as above would cost, exclusive of bedding and kitchen utensils, crockery, &c., about 250 francs. Of course, I have been in French workmen's homes much better furnished, but they are exceptions.

But if the appearance of the homes is such as to give Mrs. John Smith, of Oldham, a very poor opinion of their material condition, I think that if Madame were to open that large wardrobe she would have much cause for bewilderment. For therein is the family's supply of table, bed and body linen. Shelf upon shelf packed tight with every conceivable variety of linen goods, most of them of the very best material, all beautifully made, all marked in a neat manner with the family initials, table cloths in heaps, serviettes enough to run a drapery store, underlinen enough to supply an English village. To come to plain figures, my wife's neighbour, a

mechanic's wife, while complaining of her small store, produced her small supply of thirty-six complete changes of linen of all kinds, for each person in the house, and for all beds and tables. And yet at the same moment she was patching with the utmost care and precision her husband's shirt. Much of this house linen had been handed down for several generations. My opinion is, however, that, with the advent of cheap cotton and linen, this habit of accumulation is slowly breaking down in Paris. It is not altogether a good sign, and many will share with me the regret that this custom should disappear, even though it is carried so often to excess. It is certainly a healthier custom than, wasting money and energy on shoddy garments and imitation Chippendale front-room suites. At the same time it would be a good thing if a sensible medium between the two extremes could be reached.

As to outside clothes and dresses, on the other hand, they are extremely simple. Many of them do not have any Sunday clothes, or rather do not wear them. They have instead best clothes for special occasions, fêtes, dances, ceremonies. Almost every working-man will have a complete dress-suit, including tall hat, &c., which he will wear three or four times a year. The women always dress neatly and tastefully, and *fashionably*, but after fashions of their own class. On no account do they attempt to imitate the fashions of the *grande mode*. I once had a conversation with a middle-class French lady, the wife of a well-known sociologist and professor. They had travelled much, and had lived long in England. She severely criticised the dress of the English working-classes, whose Sunday clothes, she said, were cheap and shoddy imitations of the richer fashionable people. We had a very pretty discussion, in which I maintained that the English idea was the more democratic. I said it proved that the English workman, at bottom, believed himself to be as good as his fellow countrymen of the wealthier classes. She maintained that it was merely snobbish imitation. I leave it to the reader as to who had the best of the argument.

One more word on the subject of clothes : Ragged or torn clothes are never seen even among the poorest. I have seen clothes, especially blue overalls of mechanics and labourers, patched neatly and in which the patches covered far more surface than the original portions of the suit. I have often been asked also by English visitors, why outdoor workers wear such wide trousers : their answer is that it is to have more freedom in the limbs when bending, or climbing ladders. But that is just why their English prototypes wear tight ones !

Washing clothes is a woman's question of great importance in England. In France, washing at home is practically unknown. In every district of Paris, in every commune and village throughout France, there is the institution of *lavoirs* or washhouses. Sometimes they are privately owned, but often they are communal property. The mode of operation in Paris is as follows : The packet of dirty linen is rolled up and tied in a long bundle the day before washing-day. It is taken to the washhouse in the evening, a wooden label is tied to it, and the owner receives a ticket with a corresponding number. The bundles are put to steep in a large tank, and hot water is pumped through for several hours during the night. Early next morning the customers arrive provided with soap, scrubbing-brushes, and large wooden bat for beating the clothes. Each woman takes her place in a stall provided with tubs, scrubbing-boards, and tap of cold water. Pails of hot water containing soda, &c., are then fetched at a charge of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. a pail ; five centimes ($\frac{1}{2}$ d.) an hour is charged for the place, and a small charge according to size of bundle for steeping. Washing over, the customer gets a key for a drying room, latticed to admit air in summer, heated with hot air in winter ; if she wishes she may for 15 centimes ($1\frac{1}{2}$ d.) have use of the *essoreuse*, a revolving drum, throwing out the water by centrifugal force, used also, I believe, in dyeing establishments. For the drying-room a charge of 1d. for 24 hours is made, the customer keeping the key until the clothes were fetched away. A week's washing for three persons,

including a suit of greasy overalls, could be done for 6d. including soap, and drying all complete, and would take about three hours and a half. Would it be out of place to remind Mr. John Smith that M. Jules never sees the washing at all until it comes back to the house all dry and ready for putting away?—unless he is a model husband, and then, of course, he will both take and fetch away the clothes for his wife.

I have referred several times to the importance of the food question in France. I do not know whether it is the national reaction from the state of semi-starvation existing prior to the French Revolution, a sort of hereditary fear of hunger, but it is a fact that to the French workmen to be badly fed is the sum of all evils. I should not wonder if the hatred of militarism is not largely due to the meagre fare and indifferent cookery of the army. I know of an English firm in Paris, where the workmen struck because of an attempt to make them work through the dinner-hour once in a case of great pressure of work, though they were working contentedly below the average standard of wages before the event. The quick-lunch is an impossible institution in France.

In the home the food is much simpler than in the cafés, but as a rule it is good, plentiful, and well-cooked. Of breakfast in the English sense there is none, a glass of black coffee and a roll on weekdays, a bowl of *café-au-lait* (coffee and hot milk in equal proportions) on Sundays.

Déjeuner will consist of soup, haricots, meat, green vegetables, a salad, cheese, fruit and coffee, with bread and wine.

Dinner at 6 to 7 p.m. may be potage (soup thickened with vermicelli or rice, vegetables and bread), omelette, salad and coffee, bread and wine.

The great feature in French cookery is variety in both food and methods of preparation. In the markets small quantities may be bought of varied meats, such as a pound of rabbit, or fowl. As a rule the food is bought every morning for the day's meals, so that all the

mountains of vegetables brought from the country to the Halles in the morning are eaten before night.

Below is a table of the cost of various household commodities in Paris :—

Bread : 35 centimes the kilogramme* in winter, 30 c. in summer.

Beef : From 50 c. boiling meat to best cuts 1.20 f. the demi-kilog.

Mutton : 70 c. the demi-kilog.

Veal : 70 c. to 1 f. the demi-kilog. (a great deal of veal is eaten).

Bacon : 1 f. to 1.40 f. (rarely eaten).

Butter : 1.20 f. a demi-kilog.

Coffee : From 1 f. a demi-kilog. (in the berry).

Sugar (before the Convention) : 60 c. a demi-kilog. (now lowered to 35 c.).

Milk : 15 c. a litre.

Coal : 3 f. for 50 kilog. (about 1 cwt.).

Wine : For the quality generally drunk by the artisans, 30 c. to 50 c. a litre.

Tea is not used by the French working-classes ; we paid from 4 to 5 francs a pound for a very indifferent quality, but found it better to order from England and pay carriage and duty.

In the co-operative societies food is somewhat cheaper and of better quality, and in the open markets the supply of vegetables is exceedingly good and cheap, and of endless variety. The French artisans may indulge, in the proper seasons, in luxuries which are only found on the rich man's table in England, for instance : Asparagus, globe artichokès, peaches, apricots, and grapes of fine quality.

Fruits not grown in France, or grown only in small quantities, are dearer than in England, as bananas, oranges, &c.

The fuel generally used is coal in the winter months

* Roughly 5 centimes= $\frac{1}{2}$ d. The Kilogramme=2.2 lb. avoirdupois. The litre=1.760 pint. Demi-kilog. = half kilogramme.

for cooking and heating, and charcoal in the summer for culinary purposes only. Charcoal costs about 10 centimes a kilogramme. Petroleum oil for lighting is 55 centimes a litre inside the Paris boundary, and 30 centimes outside. This difference is due to a tax at the gates. Gas is charged at the rate of 20 centimes a cubic metre (about 4s. 8d. per 1,000 cubic feet). It is not much used, however, by the working classes, in their homes. The staircases and landings in the artisan dwellings are lighted by gas, and some *ménages* use it for cooking in summer.

One of the features of the faubourgs is the market. The markets are held in the principal streets or squares on different days, generally twice on week-days on each stand, and on Sundays. In Grenelle, markets were held in the Rue de Vouille on Tuesday, Friday, and Sunday. The market consisted of two long lines of stalls on either side of this broad road. The stalls contained vegetables, poultry, butcher's meats, groceries, with one or two hardware stalls. The goods were generally cheap and of great variety. The meat is generally sold cut into different parts ready for *fricassée*, *vagoût* or *roti*, and poultry, rabbits, &c., are sold by the pound, *i.e.*, the customer may, if she wishes, buy a pound or even less of rabbit, or goose. As it is customary in France to buy in each day only for the day's meals, it will be seen how convenient this is in order to enable the housewife to get a variety of food for the family meals.

From the above facts, taken in conjunction with the figures relating to wages, it will be possible to form a rough estimate of the economic position of the workers in respect to the necessities of life. But, in comparing the position with that of the English artisan, it must be noted that all manufactured goods are much dearer in France—clothes, soap, utensils of various kinds, all the little things which make up the household expenses in addition to food.

In addition to this, on the other side, all the amusements and relaxations, which may be counted as

necessaries to the average worker, are much easier and cheaper to obtain in France.

No possible figures, or arrangements of figures, however, can show the relative well-being of the two nations whose methods of life and whose demands are so different, but my experience, which I deem a very full one, leads me to the following generalisations :

First, that the French working man leading his life, and the English artisan his ordinary mode of existence, a wage of 50 francs a week in Paris will be equivalent to a wage of 30s. a week in Stratford or any artisan suburb of London.

Second, that, taking all classes of labour into consideration, and forming an average, the same skill and standing that will secure 30s. in London will obtain 50 francs in Paris.

I make these statements with the following reservations: That in England wages will sink lower than in Paris for lower classes of labour, and will rise higher in the case of superior workers, in proportion to the average in each country.

As to effort put forth to secure this economic position, in England the average hours of work are much shorter (the proportion is 54 hours in England to 60 in France, or even longer in certain industries), but I believe the intensity of the labour is much less in France, and as a curious anomaly to the state of class antagonism there is more consideration for the aged worker and less exploitation of the apprentice and child worker.

I may fairly sum up this comparison by referring to a previous statement, viz. : That the economic position is practically the same in each country, but that, unless he adapted himself entirely to the social life of the country, the worker, English or French, who crossed the Channel to work would find himself in a worse position.

I would add that the man who can adapt himself will be the gainer in either case, if not materially, at any rate from the point of view of a wider outlook on life.

CHAPTER VI.

There is a very common assertion in England that family life does not exist in France. Max O'Rell says that the sole evidence for this utterly untrue statement is the absence of a common noun to translate the English word "home." The word *foyer* (hearth), once in general use, is now almost obsolete, but the word *chez* used at present is a derivative of "case" (*casa*), a cabin or cottage. Not only does French family life exist, but it is carried to a point of exclusiveness unknown in any other country. I can well conceive of a foreigner living in France for a number of years, and never seeing the inside of French home life. If he moves among the French middle-classes he may be among the *habitués* of the weekly *salon* or reception, but among the workers there is not even this mode of entry into the circle. In this respect I was peculiarly fortunate. Brought up as I was among them, I naturally had the entry to the homes of my old friends, and, further, my most intimate acquaintance there had been my guest in England some years previous, and, as he was a man of great intelligence, his explanations of many mysteries were very valuable to me. One of the facts of French family life is that, in spite of the seemingly sordid nature of the marriage contract, there are so few unhappy marriages. If marriage in France is a business it is a remarkably well-conducted and successful business. Its dominant note is order, neatness, serenity and an abnormal economy. Neither of the parties seem to make great demands on the other, but both agree in subordinating everything to the welfare of their children. Perhaps the best way

to give a correct impression of the evolution of the home life will be to give an account of the family history of a typical (if imaginary) French *ménage*. Jules B—— has had the extreme pleasure of meeting, accompanied by her father and mother of course, the daughter of M. Lebrun, who is an older workman at the same establishment as Jules. He is much struck with her, and as he has done his military service, and is a good hand at his trade, he feels justified in seeking a closer acquaintance. All the more so as M. and Mme. Lebrun are known to Jules's parents, who have often spoken of the charms, graces and qualities of Mademoiselle Lebrun. He will, of course, acquaint his father and mother first of his desire. This may appear strange in a young man of twenty-four or five, but it happens as often as not that the father and mother themselves look out for a suitable partner, and then invite their son to pass his opinion on their choice of his future wife, whom he may never have seen previously. Jules will then present himself the following Sunday to the parents of Mademoiselle Lebrun, and ask their permission to be presented to their charming daughter and to give her the *bouquet* he has brought with him. After several visits, during which the parents of the girl are always present, the acquaintance deepens, and the young man will deliver, unabashed by the presence of his future mother-in-law, his declaration of affection, and eventually will formally ask M. and Mme. Lebrun for their daughter's hand. Meanwhile the parents of Jules have not been idle. They have probably visited or met M. and Mme. Lebrun and have exchanged information as to the material side of the question. Sentiment is altogether put on one side, and left to the young folks. The important thing for the parents of Jules is to know how much *dot* (dowry) they are going to give their daughter, and M. and Mme. Lebrun wish to know what is Jules's earning capacity, his character—is he temperate, steady, good-humoured? Is he healthy? &c. The amount of the dowry, even among the poorest, would astonish

some of the pseudo-economists, who judge of the material position of the Frenchman by the absence of things they do not desire and would not have, even if they could buy them for a trifle. One of my neighbours, a carpenter, gave his daughter 3,000 francs (£120) on the occasion of her marriage to a young mechanic. And yet none of the parties or their friends thought it in any way extraordinary, though my own impression was that it was somewhat above the average. But to return to Jules. Before the engagement is formally recognised the parents of both will visit a solicitor and make out legal documents to ratify the contract. The marriage day arrives, and in nine cases out of ten the ceremony takes place at the Mairie and at the church. Many of the young men, it is true, look upon the latter ceremony as somewhat of a joke; others go through under protest and only as a concession to the mothers; only a very few, among the professed freethinkers, consistently refuse the latter ceremony. I had occasion to refer in an earlier chapter to my friend Maurice, a young man, diffident and sensitive as a girl under ordinary circumstances, but as firm as a rock in all matters of principle. I had opportunity of confirming this impression when his parents in due course urged him to begin married life. He submitted without question to a wife being chosen for him, though he had never seen her. With true French filial obedience, he left to his mother and father the arrangement of the business details. They, his parents and the young lady, were in a provincial town in Touraine, and he was in lodgings in Paris, but he told me he had full confidence in their judgment. When all was complete, however, he wrote and told them that he would not go through the ceremony at the church, but would go only to the *Mairie*.* This was a thunderbolt to the good folks at home, but, in spite of entreaties and threats, he was unmovable, and, greatly to his regret, for he was an affectionate son, the marriage

* Town Hall—i.e., Civil Registrar.

was broken off. But Maurice was an exception. Most Frenchmen, if they had been satisfied with the other conditions, would have said: "*Allons !* it is farce, well and good, but it will do me no harm, and it is not worth making a row about it." And, so with Jules; taking him as the average *ouvrier*, we will assume that he has visited M. le Maire, and been blessed by M. le Curé. There will be a great *noce*, or wedding spree. A room in a good restaurant will have been engaged, and a dinner for from 50 to 100 persons ordered. Most of the guests will have on their *habits de ceremonie* (best dress suits), and a dance will be kept on until the small hours of the morning. Altogether a first-rate affair. Next day the members of the family, the married couple, and the principal guests will drive in open carriages to Vincennes, Robinson, or St. Cloud, in the full glory of their festive attire. On their way through the town they will be saluted by groups of workmen with cries of "*Vive la mariée*,"* and facetious ones will add "*Vive la belle-mère*."† In a few days they will settle down to their *ménage*, and begin the ordinary family history of the average French artisan. The next important event will be the advent of a child. Its name will be duly chosen from the calendar, and most probably there will again be the shadow of the Church over the family in the shape of the baptism. In this ceremony, however, there will be far more departures from custom. Jules is now his own master, and if he is a *militant* he will endeavour to resist the overweening desire for a ceremony which seems to be part of the make-up of all French women. But the Church has a long arm, and with silent, unseen power can make things uncomfortable for Jules. The Church seems to care little about Jules's opinions, and his fervid denunciations of the *calotte* in workshop or meeting; but about his conforming with her ceremonies she does care. The sisters will visit Madame (in Jules's absence) and will stiffen her back in resisting her husband's desire. They will show how the

* Three cheers for the bride. † Cheers for the mother-in-law.

Church can hinder their offspring's career, how the best posts will be closed against it, how the best marriages will be impossible, how, in fact, a hundred complications will arise in its life, if they refuse the offices of Holy Church; and eventually Jules will give way, consoling himself by the reflection that when his child is of age to understand he will see to it that the shackles of religion shall be broken. This is not hearsay, I have the best of evidence for it. When my own child was born in Paris, informed probably by some officious neighbour, two of these ladies in black visited my wife, and asked her if she would allow the child to be baptised into the Catholic Church. They understood that Monsieur was going to become a French *citoyen*, and began by pointing out the advantages that would accrue from the course suggested by them. Then they tried to impress my wife with the grandeur of the ceremony. Finding these arguments of no avail, they then tried open bribery; offers of money, of position, failed also. Their next tack was to work on her fears with pictures of hell and the torments and terrors of purgatory. Their failure was even more pronounced, as my wife then threw off her unwillingness to offend by attacking their opinions, and supplemented her objections by producing copies of Renan and Darwin from my bookcase. They then showed their true colours, and, having previously found out my place of employment, threatened to use their powers against me there, and close the doors of further work against me in France, and after a violent diatribe against Darwin as an *espece de fou* and a corrupter of morals they stalked indignantly away. Fortunately, their power in this instance was less than they thought it, and we heard no more of the matter. I take this opportunity of thanking them for their very useful contribution to my stock of information about the connection of the Church with French family life.

Our typical French *ménage* will go through the formal ceremony of bestowing a name on their offspring, and once more the ceremony will be also the occasion for a

te de famille, a general reunion of relatives from far and near, to celebrate the baptism. The public again participate, in the shape of the rising generation of the neighbourhood, who stand outside to scramble for the towers of *dragées* (sweetmeats), thrown at intervals out of the window. A passing 'bus will also come in as a convenient target for these missiles, to the great amusement of the passengers. In this, as in many other phases of French life, it is noticeable what a kindly, if passing interest, the general public displays in the incidents of each individual's family history.

Paris ! Paris ! Paradis de la femme !

So runs the first line in a popular street song, and I think that, taking Paris as France, the lot of the French married woman of the artisan class seems a shade nearer Paradise than that of women in other countries. We have never been able to explain the exact causes of it, but, whatsoever they are, the mother in France seems to be able, without detriment to her domestic economy, to devote a great deal more of her time to the real duties of motherhood, viz: playing with her children, and taking them out for long afternoons on the boulevards and into the public gardens.

On warm afternoons in Grenelle, the Boulevard Victor along the fortifications, and one of the pleasantest avenues in the faubourgs) is alive with women, and babies under school age. The women sit on the seats or on the green banks of the ramparts, sewing, mending, or even trimming their vegetables for the evening meal, while the young ones play around, or watch the soldiers exercising in the Champs de Manœuvre of Issy. The children coming from school go there and join in the play until evening, when they must go home to prepare the dinner for Monsieur Jules. Probably the principal reasons for this advantage possessed by the French housewives are the absence of useless furniture in their homes, the general cleanliness of the climate, and the different arrangement of the meal hours, all of which

considerably diminish the calls on her time. The flat system certainly has its advantages as well as the reverse. In Paris there is one feature of the rearing of children which must be noted, viz: the large number of people who send their babies into the country to be nursed for the first two or three years of infancy. To such an extent does this exist that minute regulations are enforced on the part of the authorities for the proper carrying out of the duties of foster-mother. Every mother sending her child out *en nourrice* must notify all particulars to the Mairie. But, in the main, I think the motive for this custom is really the laudable one of considering the better physical advantage of the child. There is a widespread belief, not without foundation, that it is difficult to rear a healthy child in the enervating atmosphere of Paris.

In time, the children of Jules will be duly vaccinated* and sent to the *école d'asile* or infant school. The mother will invariably accompany her children to the infant school, and they are brought back by the teachers to the street end. Eventually the real school life of the children will begin. Most of the children of the working-classes attend the communal (or municipal) schools. Only a small percentage attend the Catholic schools. I speak, of course, of the industrial districts. I have no intention of dealing in any way with the details of the French educational system. I will refer those who wish for information on that head to the many treatises by experts in education. But, as my own school days began in these communal schools, I may give a brief account as to the way in which child life is passed there. To begin with, I may say that these schools are entirely secular, and, further, that no kind of corporal punishment is allowed in them. They are entirely free, and though the parents generally buy the books and requisites, these are furnished free to children whose parents cannot afford it. In many districts free meals are given to the

* The anti-vaccinist is as yet unknown in France.

children, and in the district where I lived as a boy a refectory large enough for all the scholars was provided, and any scholar could stay to the mid-day meal, for which a small charge was made. But the system was so arranged that no one could tell which boys received their meals gratis. School begins early in the morning—eight o'clock—and goes on to five o'clock, with an interval of an hour and a half for *déjeuner*, and a short play-time in the morning and in the afternoon. The timetable is very rigidly adhered to, and the conduct, I believe, is, on the whole, very good. But parents take a great interest in their children's progress, and every week they receive a report as to their conduct and attainments. A system of rewards and punishments exists which seems very effective to secure discipline and attention, though one may very well question the value of the method from the point of view of social morality. In every lesson a number of marks are given in the shape of *bons points*, or tickets with various values on them. At the end of each day an additional number is given for general behaviour, attendance, punctuality, and each week a number of *bons points* are exchanged for a *billet de satisfaction*. These tickets of various values are current coin, and all the ordinary punishments for inattentiveness, unpunctuality, &c., can be paid for with a stipulated number of them. If the offence is serious, it will receive a punishment without exemption, that is without the option of paying for it in *bons points*. The ordinary punishments are *picquet*, *retenue* and impositions.

Picquet (picket or sentinel) is the usual punishment for small offences—inattention, &c. The offenders sentenced to this stand in a row, at attention, along the wall, superintended by a master, what time the other boys are enjoying their play-time, and woe betide any boy who was caught exchanging a smile or a nod with those outside the rank of offenders. *Retenue* is a more serious detention, taking place generally on Thursday afternoons, the usual half-holiday, and accompanied by various tasks. Impositions usually take the form of verbs to be

conjugated, and the verb is always fitted to the crime. Henri is drawing his teacher on his slate and holding it up for the delectation of his comrades, but the lynx eye of M. Parisel is upon him, and "Henri, come here. Ah! Very nice indeed. Now go back, and to-morrow you will bring me the complete verb, *faire des caricatures de son maître*.* And then Henri's evening will be spent in writing out: *Je fais des caricatures de mon maître; tu fais des caricatures de ton maître*, throughout the many moods and tenses of the French verb. Home lessons are given to the children, and, in fact, the whole of school life is very arduous, though, owing to the almost family interest taken by the teachers in the children under their care, it is extremely pleasant. I have read many criticisms of French school life, and among the principal charges brought against it are the "spying and watching" which goes on, and the "absence of games and recreation." I can assure my readers that these charges are utterly untrue as far as the public elementary schools are concerned. But I am well aware of the origin of this mistake. The writers have assumed life in the Catholic schools, especially those of the middle-class order, to be the average French school life, and thus the charges are really against the Catholic ideal, and not the French ideal, in education. When I remember the uproarious games of *barres* in my old playground; when I picture the long lines of boys madly leaping over each other's backs at leap-frog; when I think of the number of windows in the school broken by the games of *bal-au-chasseur*—I am tempted to remind the critics that football and cricket do not exhaust the whole range of boyish games and activities. I am inclined to ask these writers whether wrestling is not a good substitute for boxing, and whether the fact of boys being taken to the rivers to learn to swim is not an advance on our elementary educational methods in respect to organised sport. The truth is, that in England, football and

* To make a caricature of one's teacher.

cricket, and especially the *watching* of these games by spectators, or reading its progress in the press, have with racing, absorbed all our national energies for amusement, and have crushed out of fashion all the thousand and one games of other days. In France, conservative and old-fashioned as it is in all things except politics, these boyish and rural games still go on, and are keenly enjoyed by our neighbours' children, whose bodies are on the whole better looked after, more supple and stronger than the bodies of our children in similar classes of society in our large industrial towns and in the unspeakable East-End slums. Systematic gymnastics, better food, and more life in the open air have gradually improved and strengthened the French race, impoverished by the generations of suffering under the old régime, and the loss of the flower of their manhood in the wars of execrable Empires; and the startling revelations of physical degeneration in this country are rapidly reducing to a fiction the accepted notion of the relative "physique" of the two countries. And yet this physical degeneration in England is co-incident with an ever-increasing interest in our national fetishes—football and cricket. Not for a moment would I suggest that these manly and healthy games are in any way to blame. On the contrary, I realise that the increased interest does *not* mean an increasing number of people playing the games, but rather that the mass of our people have *ceased* to play at anything in order to watch immense shows in which the actors are practically public entertainers, just as much as the music-hall artiste or circus acrobat. There is more physical good in encouraging our children to *play* the childish and old-fashioned games of leap-frog, kite-flying, &c., than in allowing them to crowd around a score or so professional footballers, or spend their mites in half-penny papers to follow the fortunes of our cricketers at the Antipodes.

In short, then, the children in France do play, and they also work at school. Rivalry is very keen, and the reward of the medal and ribbon for first place is eagerly

sought after by the children. The culmination of the year's work and the system of rewards is in the annual prize-day. Parents and children of the schools in each district gather together in the town hall or other public building. The children are dressed in their best. On the platform is the Mayor, arrayed in his tricolour sash of office, and around him are the notabilities of the town. On the tables in front are piles of highly-coloured volumes and crowns of (paper) olive leaves, some of them gilded. The children are together in the body of the hall, and at a signal they stand up and sing the "Marseillaise." Then one by one the children are called up to the table, a crown placed on his or her head, a few kindly words of praise, and the presentation of the prizes. At last the table is cleared, and parents and children proudly march away bearing their trophies. It is difficult to convey in words the impressions of this ceremony, but the whole atmosphere shows clearly two things: The intense interest taken by all sections of the people in education and in children generally, and also the essential childishness of French children. There is no mistake about it. The exuberance of their joy in all the little pleasures of life, their innocent vanity and pride in their successes, and genuine chagrin at their failures, are not the marks of premature old men and women.

Thus will the children of Jules pass away their childhood, protected on every side from anything that will give them a moment's pain; and all who know anything of France are agreed that in no country do the parents sacrifice themselves to their children as much as the French. The end of the elementary school life is generally marked by two events: the *première communion* (confirmation) and the examination for the *Certificat d'Etudes*, or school-leaving certificate. The *première communion* is another religious ceremony accompanied by a family fête. Its main importance, as far as the children themselves are concerned, is that it is the occasion for a new suit of clothes of more manly cut for the boys, and a new dress for the girls. Another

conflict will take place between mother and father as to whether they should allow their children to go through the *communion*, but the best proof that the mother, aided by the influence of the Church, will win, is found in the following facts: In a school in Grenelle, where I knew the schoolmaster, I found one year that out of thirty-two children of age for this ceremony, only three did not wear the white brassard (arm-sash), which is the outward emblem of *communion*, and yet almost all the boys' fathers were avowed freethinkers. Many of the men console themselves with the idea that this event, which is supposed to mark the acceptance of the child into the membership of the Church, in reality ends his connection with it. In a few months he will be in another atmosphere, that of the workshop, where he will breathe in the sentiments of hostility to the Church, and be ready with the best of them to assail its priests with the cries of "*A bas la calotte.*" The girls, on the other hand, will, except in rare cases, be still under the influence of *les bonnes sœurs*, and thus the wide difference in outlook between men and women will be perpetuated.

The *Certificat d'Etudes* has a double importance. Without it, the scholar must remain at school another year before going to work, and with this certificate, provided he has passed with a certain number of marks, he may obtain entry into a secondary school. The subjects are the usual elementary ones: a fairly high standard in French language and history, a very detailed knowledge of geography, especially of France, arithmetic, drawing, &c. Like all French examinations, it is both written and oral. Many artisans send their children into the technical schools, which I am dealing with in a later chapter.

The old ideal of the French family is to keep the girls at home, but industrialism is gradually breaking down this custom, and many artisans' children now find their way into the factories, and with all their faults this is better than going into the Rue de la Paix to be apprenticed to the swell dressmakers and become the prey of the wealthy

and vicious of all nations, who protect the virtue of their own households by polluting that of the daughters of the people. For the girls who must go out to work, the best thing certainly is to be apprenticed to some local *blanchisseuse*,* milliner, or confectioner, where she will learn a trade in which she may eventually start business on her own, and where the influences will be more of a family character and, therefore, not so demoralising.

In discussing these questions of the sexes, account must be taken of the large number of illegitimate unions in Paris. I have already mentioned the fact that there are a large number of bachelors in Paris, whose families are in the provinces. It is folly to shut one's eyes to the fact that where such conditions obtain, there will also be found the great evil of prostitution. But after close observation of the facts, and conversation with workmen in both countries, I am convinced that whatever may be the case with the middle classes, actual and brutal prostitution is not practised to any large extent by the French working classes, and this form of the evil is less there than it is in the industrial towns in England. The average French workman, while making no claim to be puritanical, looks upon the satisfaction of sexual desires by means of a money payment as brutal, degrading, and inartistic. But on the other hand, he will deem a love intrigue with the same end in view as a legitimate and praiseworthy practice. Hence, a man would be utterly shamed to acknowledge having entered in cold blood into a *maison de tolérance*, which are very scarce in working class districts; but the same man will talk of his "mistress" as a matter of course, in many cases where she has no existence except in his own imagination. As a consequence, large numbers of working-men live maritally with women, without legal sanction. But, it is bare justice to add that many of these unions become permanent *ménages* or households, and often are subsequently legalised. Generally when a child is born the

* Laundress.

time arrives when the test of permanency takes place. If the father, in deference to his parents' wish, or in his own interests, chooses to desert his companion there is no redress. The inevitable result is the downgrade of the woman, and the charities, public or private, for the child; but in most cases the father will accompany the mother to the Mairie, where the child will be named and entered as *Reconnu de père et mère*,* and is for all practical purposes as good as legitimate. Often the Maire will try and persuade them to legalise their union also. Many, however, of these unions are entered into consciously by men and women who object on principle to the interference of law into sex-relationships. These are generally men and women claiming to be Anarchist or *Libertaires*. On the whole, however, even with these, the immediate interests of their offspring prevails, and, awaiting the realisation of their ideals, they will eventually conform to the legal recognition. In spite of all their idealism, and their daring speculations in the world of thought, the dominant feature in the French character is prudence, worldly wisdom, and strong common sense, where their own affairs are concerned.

* Recognised by father and mother.

CHAPTER VII.

In the foregoing chapters I have dealt with the social and economic life of the French workers, as I believe that it is impossible to understand the political and intellectual organisation without first having a grasp of the material conditions, of which they are the reflex.

In the picture I have shown, I have tried to give a general impression that the industrial workers lead calm, contented lives, in which there is much sunshine, and in which the clouds are borne with patience and resignation. This is a correct outside impression, and a casual observer might easily carry it away as showing the true state of affairs. And yet a more thorough knowledge will show that the great outstanding fact in their mental make-up is a deep and bitter discontent.

This discontent does not find expression in constant grumblings and wailings. It is a peculiarity of the character of the French people to look on the cheerful side of things, especially in conversation with the stranger, and in relation to their own private affairs. But in chance expressions among familiar acquaintances, in unguarded moments, the smouldering discontent shows itself, and every now and again events occur which make it burst into flame.

It is, however, in the extreme bitterness and virulence of the feelings, in matters political and religious, that this fact is best seen.

In this country, where the history of politics is a history of successive compromises between class interests, we cannot understand the absence of any mutual inter-

course between people of different political and religious views.

Though this state of affairs exists in all classes in France, they are intensified in the case of the working classes.

I have already made references to their attitude towards the Catholic Church. This may be extended to meet the position in respect to religion generally. In all my experience of French workmen, I did not meet half-a-dozen who gave themselves up to any speculations concerning the question of religion in the abstract. The industrial population in Paris and the large towns could be divided into two camps, viz., the followers of the orthodox religion and the avowed disbelievers. The former are, of course, the passive and unquestioning members of the Church, who make no inquiries respecting their faith; they are mainly the recent comers from the country, and the bulk of the women. The others, by far the greater number, are bitter opponents of the clergy, but are absolutely indifferent to the questions of abstract religion. Whatever question be addressed to the average workman as to his opinions on particular questions such as immortality or future existence, creation, the existence of a Supreme Being, the only remarks elicited will be, first, a question as to whether you are joking, and then an expression of surprise that you should concern yourself about the matter. To show any interest in these things, even from a philosophical or gnostic standpoint is to run the risk of being classed as Clerical. It never occurs to him that anyone should even trouble to criticise either religion or religions in detail. The general opinion of men freed from the shackles of the church in which most of them were baptised is that the whole thing is a piece of ridiculous nonsense, or at best an invention for purposes of statecraft, which the priests themselves do not believe, but which it is their trade to preach. This opinion is not built up on any serious reading, either of the Bible or biblical criticism, of which they know nothing. It is the

outcome of their opposition to the clergy as the opponents of progress, and as the allies of their political and class enemies.

The same thing holds good in respect to the authenticity of the accounts of the life of Christ. Among 200 men in a workshop, I only knew one who had read Renan, and though a convinced agnostic, he told me not to talk about the matter to his comrades, or he would be laughed at if they really knew what was in the "Life of Jesus." He was probably the only one who could have held his own in a serious discussion on the question, though, of course, the others would never have imagined such a thing as a serious discussion. And yet the name of Renan is held in high repute among them. Was he not drummed out of the Church? That is quite enough! In almost every Republican commune there is a Rue Ernest Renan. The adherents to Catholicism are in like case; they were baptised, they have done their first *communion*, they know their catechism and their *Histoire Sainte* (a condensation of the two testaments of the Bible), they confess regularly and go to mass, and they profess a belief in Holy Church. And that is all. They would be absolutely unable to answer the simplest objection to any of their articles of faith. But, of course, they would never want to do so. The responsibility of that matter lies with the priest, and to think it discussable by them is heresy. The only answer you would get from the pious Breton, if you assailed his creed, would be for him to go away and make the sign of the Cross.

But though these two sections never meet on the ground of intellectual discussion, their mutual hostility is inconceivably bitter, and their actions towards each other are in strong contrast to the spirit of comradeship existing between those of like opinions.

The great mass of workmen in Paris are professedly on the side of opposition to the clergy, and never miss any opportunity of giving vent to their feelings on the matter.

It is at this stage that I must call attention to the

most curious anomalies I have before referred to in this connection.

In the workshop with which I was connected there were about 200 workmen. At the outside, not more than 30 (if so many) were professing Catholics. During two years, in which I took notes of the matter, there occurred some 30 funerals of either employees or relatives of workmen.* In almost every case the persons concerned professed anti-Catholic sentiments. But all except *three* were buried with the rites and ceremonies of the Church. One of the exceptions was the manager's daughter. But they were a family of bourgeois free-thinkers. Several marriages also took place, some of them of men, or sons of men, prominently known as anti-Clericals. They were all solemnised at church. The same thing occurred in respect to the baptism and communion of children. The data for these facts were most reliable, viz., printed funeral or invitation notices pinned on the workshop notice-board and visible to all, corroborated by local press notices, and official notices at the Mairie, and personal information.

These inconsistencies excited no comment, and when questioned some on the matter, they replied variously, and gave the following reasons: old customs, family obligations, *i.e.*, not to offend or hurt the parents' feelings, business reasons (especially in the case of marriages). The most general reason, however, was "*pour faire comme les autres*" (to do like the others).

It justifies the impression I already had that the opposition is largely political, and how strong the opposition is to Clericalism could be seen by the tremendous demonstrations in the Place de la Concorde, and on the boulevard St. Germain, in 1902, on the occasion of the closing of the various religious associations who were infringing the law. Readers of French political newspapers will remember how a prominent Socialist leader was virulently attacked because it transpired that his

* Cf. page 19.

daughter had done her first *communion* in the orthodox religion. He was a prominent freethinker, indeed one of the most able exponents both of Socialism and Free-thought. The time of the attack on him—which was both from inside and outside his party—was several years after the alleged inconsistency, and since that time she had attended a secular *lycée*. His explanation was perfectly clear and candid, viz., that it had been a matter of agreement between him and his wife—a devout Catholic—at the time of their marriage, that their child should follow the usual routine until she was of age to choose for herself, and that until her *communion* the mother should have control over her education. Yet this delicate family matter was dragged into the newspapers, and he was compelled to make a reply, which he did in one of the most manly articles I have ever read.

Some of his assailants in the workshop discussions were men who, I happened to know, were actually committing the same inconsistency at the very moment, *i.e.*, their children were actually attending the confirmation classes, or they were in some way performing one or the other of the Catholic ceremonies. When I pointed this out to them, they made exactly the same defence, viz., family reasons over which they had no control!

It must not be assumed, however, that there is any great amount of latent belief in the dogmas of Catholicism among French workmen. The real truth is, that as a set of dogmas or doctrinal beliefs, Christianity had lost its hold on the French people several generations ago, but their natural conservatism, especially in all affairs appertaining to family customs, has kept them in touch with the Church ceremonies and the clergy. This preservation of the outward shell, after the real kernel of belief had gone, might have gone on for a long time undisturbed, but for the political and economical struggle in which the Church plays a part as an organised body, generally in antagonism to Republican ideas and institutions, and to the social aspirations of the workers and their leaders. The adherence to these outward forms will disappear in

time; indeed, the slowness of the process is *really* due—as the explanations above referred to show—to the great difference of education between men and women, and as a result the strong attachment of the women to the glamour of these ceremonies, which form the great event of their otherwise uneventful lives.

Most of the workmen I met, in spite of these inconsistencies, look upon the priesthood as a sort of police in the employers' interests, and as the organisers of all the attempts to destroy their movements, and to bring back more hated forms of government. And as a matter of absolute fact, the Church, as an organisation, and through its press, is the ally of militarism, anti-Semitism, and of monarchy. It is also the creator of the famous *syndicat jaunes*, about which I shall have more to say when dealing with trade unionism.

The subject of monarchy brings me to the relation of an incident which will illustrate both the bitterness of feeling in matters political, and the absurdity of those English newspapers which pretend to see a desire among French workmen for a return to that form of Government.

One morning Maurice brought a circular, which he gave me with an air of great mystery. It was an invitation, headed "private and very confidential," to attend a meeting organised by the Royalist Committee of the XV. Arrond. (Grenelle). The circular was decorated with various royalist devices, and the motto *Dieu et le Roy*,* and appealed to the people invited (mostly shopkeepers and small business men) to maintain great secrecy, as important matters were to be discussed. My friend informed me that he and several others had got hold, unknown to the organisers of the meeting, of a hundred or two invitations and had distributed them in the workshop and among their friends. The meeting was to be held the same night in a large room of a café in the Rue Croix-Nivert. Being very curious to see the

* Roy, old French for Roi—king.

developments, my wife and I both arrived in good time, and we took our places in the middle of a large room. It was sumptuously got up, and at the platform end was a sort of throne on a raised dais. At the back was a large royalist banner, and around the door were several stewards bearing royalist arm-badges. About 30 men of powerful build, evidently engaged defenders in case of necessity, were massed in one corner and bore the same badges. Gradually the room began to fill, and I recognised many of my workmen friends among the audience. At the same time several personages took up a position on the platform; they were ladies and gentlemen evidently belonging to the aristocratic classes. At first all went on quietly until the doorkeeper suddenly barred the passage to one or two well-known Socialist workmen of the quarter. A violent altercation took place, and the men inside began to cry out "Let them in! Let them in!" A scuffle ensued, in which the doorkeeper, a man of powerful build, picked up a chair and struck at his opponents. Immediately the room became a perfect pandemonium. Chairs flew about the place. Several men picked up forms, and using them as battering rams, rushed at their antagonists. Free fights were engaged in all over the room, mirrors and candelabras were shattered. We stood up in a corner, amazed spectators of the scene, and especially at the suddenness of the outbreak. I noticed the swell gentry quietly dropping out at the back door leaving the fight to their stewards and supporters. The throne was broken to pieces, and the royalist banners were torn to shreds. It suddenly transpired that the proprietor had locked the door, evidently to go for the police. As the workmen had by this time almost disposed of the royalists, they used their battering-rams on the partition dividing the room from the café. To make matters worse the gas was cut off, but just then down came the partition and the triumphant workers burst out. By this time all the Faubourg was awakened to the event, and until long after midnight a demonstration was kept up in the streets, amid Socialist and Republican songs

and war cries. This was the first and only monarchist meeting I ever heard of in Grenelle. They wisely hold them now in the quiet seclusion of the Fauburg St. Germain, or in the salons of the Champs-Élysées. Incidentally, this event threw a strong sidelight on certain points of the French character. I have often heard it remarked, and I had often thought myself, that it was difficult to understand how a people so urbane, so quiet, and good-natured as the French seem to be could ever have played the terrible dramas of 1789 and other periods. But here I saw the thing on a small scale. My neighbour, one of the quietest and most amiable men I ever met, fought like a demon with the burly doorkeeper, and throughout this lively half-hour I saw a body of most peaceful and laughter-loving men transformed into very tigers. I realised, in fact, that in this, as in many other things, the real forces of the French character are latent, and that their seeming superficiality hides a reserved depth of feeling which can only be sounded by one in close and long continued contact with their every-day life.

No one can live long in France without being impressed by the effect of the military system on the French people. The compulsory service of every adult male at an age when they are most likely to be influenced cannot fail to leave behind it some permanent result. And yet one of the most remarkable things is the vast difference between the mentality of the French and English soldier or ex-soldier. Generally speaking, the English military man is a being apart from the general life of the nation. After a few months' service, he feels that the civilian is in another world. To him the world is divided between soldiers and non-soldiers. He has his own code of morals, his own ideas of the proprieties, different from, and often antagonistic to, the civilian code. To the Frenchman, on the contrary, military service is only one of the phases of his life through which he passes in common with the rest of his fellows, and hence he continues to keep his contact with civilian society, and civilian society

remains in permanent contact with the soldier, who is naturally a feature of every group of individuals.

At the beginning of every year, in a large workshop, several young men are sure to be called up for service. When the time comes round, it is customary for the shopmates to make a collection to provide a good send-off to the young conscripts. (This is also done for the reservists who go up for the annual training of 28 or 13 days.) This is the time also when you hear the opinion of those who have done their service about the army and army life.

This opinion is naturally varied according to the individuals, but I may say that I have never yet heard any Frenchmen, not even the most fervent patriot, speak with even qualified admiration for the life of the soldier. A few, mainly the devout Catholics, speak of the army with reverence, as a sacred institution. They look upon their service as a duty they owe to their religion, and incidentally as the instrument which will one day restore a Government—imperial, monarchical, or dictatorial—which will have more consideration for the privileges of Holy Church. A far larger number take the institution as a mere matter of course, as a thing established, and not to be altered by them. They have the ordinary French quality of patient endurance of necessary evils, and they merely hope to get through their term of service with as little trouble to themselves as possible. But the great majority of French artisans and labourers in the towns, and particularly in industrial Paris, speak in terms of unmeasured opposition to the whole system. They are all anti-militarist, and while they recognise the futility of individual resistance they carry on a ceaseless propaganda against the military spirit and the military system. I recognised, however, two distinct ideas on this propaganda. The more educated section of the artisans, especially those organised in trade unions and political societies, have more knowledge of the conditions obtaining in other countries, and the state of mind of working men on this subject in other parts of the world. They recognise the

impossibility at the present time of France taking the step of total disarmament, until the general sentiment of other nations is more in accord with their own ideas. And, hence, they confine their arguments to the substitution of a citizen army for a standing army, and profess a great admiration for the efficiency of the Swiss militia system. The other section, mainly the anarchist and libertarian groups—whose numbers, by the way, have increased greatly of late—advocate openly the total abolition of the army, and do their best to spread disaffection among the recruits. I knew many of these men, and had personally a great admiration for them, and found them the most courageous in resisting the continuous encroachments upon personal liberty made by both employers and the police authorities. But they utterly failed to recognise the extremely slight character of the disarmament movement outside France. There is one point however, on which the propaganda of both these sections is united, viz., the necessity for instilling into the mind of the recruit his absolute duty to refuse to be used for suppressing popular uprisings. He is told by all sections Anarchist or Socialist, that in the event of a strike among his fellow-workmen in any part of France he must, at any risk to himself, refuse to fire on his comrades if ordered to do so. So well has this doctrine been instilled into the minds of the French soldier that during the strikes of miners at Montceau-les-Mines in 1901, of iron workers at the Creusot, and dockers at Dunkerque, events occurred which produced consternation in the minds of the French bourgeoisie. The soldiers were called out and orders were given to mass meetings of strikers to disperse immediately. This they refused to do, and the soldiers were given the command to fire. Instead of which, they immediately lifted the butt end of their rifles in the air, and began to chant the "Internationale." In the Creusot, so sudden and so unexpected was this movement that the officers were utterly demoralised, and the men formed up on their own account and marched back to their quarters. No official report of the matter was

made to headquarters, and every effort was made to hush up the incident for fear of the disaffection spreading to other regiments. None of the men were punished, and, contrary to expectation, the regiment was *not* sent to the *compagnies de discipline* at Biribi (Algerie). In spite of the attempts to keep these incidents quiet, two sections of the Press advertised them largely—the Socialist Press and the monarchist papers. The first-named, of course, rejoiced at these signs of growing class-consciousness, and the *Autorité*, *La Patrie*, &c., used them as bogeys to frighten the *petite bourgeoisie* into seeking safety in a restoration of a reactionary Government which would have the courage to punish the mutineers. The then existing Government, that of M. Waldeck-Rousseau, was powerless to act. They could not dispense with the support of the Extreme Left, and dare not seek the help of the Right, and for this reason they took the only possible course, and ignored the whole business. But in succeeding strikes they wisely kept the military out of sight. In Paris, however, they have resort to the *Garde Républicaine* and the mounted police, composed of men picked from a class they can depend upon. In strikes and disturbances in the capital, the ordinary soldiers are confined closely to barracks, and, moreover, the regiments stationed in or near Paris are generally composed of men from the less affected districts (Bretagne and the west coast generally).

This disaffection in the Army is not, however, confined to demonstrations on the occasion of strikes. In the *grande manœuvres* at Reims, in 1901, several regiments refused to march until they dropped under the ardent rays of the sun in July. In fact, throughout the French Army a movement is growing up against unreasoning obedience to authority.

One of the features of the annual propaganda against militarism is a paper published in January, and circulated broadcast among the young recruits. It is entitled *Le Conscriit* (The Conscript), and is read eagerly by all classes of workmen. I have a copy before me at

present, and every column breathes uncompromising hostility to the military system. Below is a *précis* of a few of the principal articles with the leading article *in extenso* :—

(LEADING ARTICLE)

“Once more the bourgeois State tears from their occupations and from their homes all the young men, in order to conduct them to the barracks, ‘that hideous invention of modern times.’

“Once more, we protest against the permanent army, and we wish to associate you, young men, with our protest.

“We know that we fight against force and prejudice, and that even some of you may refuse to listen; but we know that the seed we sow will rise.

“Some has already risen.

“Already, at Dunkerque and the Creusot and elsewhere, the soldiers have shown their officers that they would not fire on their brothers out on strike.

“Already, in spite of the indignant clamour of the Nationalist or Government Press, in all parts of France, at the last autumn manoeuvres the reservists and the men of the active army answered the arbitrary command of their chiefs by singing the ‘Workers’ Internationale.’

“Something *has* been changed then; they are already numerous in the Army, those who refuse, when they put on the uniform, to become the passive tools of generals in league with financiers and priests.

“It is to these you must belong when you get into barracks.

“Make no mistake, we do not counsel individual revolt. It is useless.

“We simply ask you to reflect, before you take the arms that kill, before you abandon the hammer,

the spade, or the pen, your tools, which may become in your hands, weapons of human freedom.

"Ask yourself why *you* should become a man of blood, why you should be obliged to sacrifice the best years of your life ?

"Consider that for 30. years, except in a few colonial expeditions in the interests of financiers, the army has only been used to protect the inhuman rich against the poor, the powerful against the weak, the exploiters against the exploited.

"Learn, if you are not already aware of it, that in the opinion of those best able to judge a citizen army is superior to a permanent army.

"Understand that national defence is only a pretext the governing classes make use of in order to set you, as soldier, against yourself as peasant employee or workman.

"Do not forget that the military servitude is temporary, and that to-morrow you will again be a proletarian in spite of honours or stripes they may give to corrupt you.

"In a word, reflect on all that you may be ordered to do. We ask nothing more."

Another important article is an examination of the advantages of the Swiss militia system over the permanent army, and in this they bring in as witnesses a long list of well-known officers who have declared in favour of this system and against barrack life.

Lieutenant-Colonel Patry declares that in the Franco-German war the young soldiers were as good as the hardened troopers.

General Brunet, General Tricoche, and Admiral Reveillère speak enthusiastically of their review of the Swiss troops. Captain Moch has written a work demonstrating the inferiority of a permanent army against a nation armed.

The article naturally refers also, as an additional proof, to the brilliant struggles of the Boer farmers against the outnumbering disciplined British permanent army. It

also shows that in 1870, the most successful resistance to the invaders was made by the volunteer armies of the Loire and the Nord.

The other articles deal with various phases of militarism, barrack life, the inhumanities of war (with special reference to the cruelties perpetrated in China by the French, German, and Russian troops during the Boxer risings), comparisons of the military codes of nations showing the preponderance of the death penalty in France.

One feature is an article entitled "Biribi!" Biribi! No Frenchman hears that word without a shudder. Young soldiers blench when the sergeant mentions the word. Old veterans speak of it in whispers. If a fraction of the stories I have been told about that awful military prison-station are true, it is, indeed, a blot on French civilisation. The first account I heard of this place I put down as out-and-out invention, or extravagant exaggeration. But I have since heard corroborations from many sources, from workmen of all shades of opinions, from privates and non-commissioned officers, that I am absolutely bound to accept the substances of them as true. Hair-raising stories of inhuman tortures, of men gagged and tied and left exposed to the hot burning sun of Africa, to the mosquitoes and insects, of water being placed just out of their reach to tantalise their thirst; of floggings, frog marches, and other refinements of cruelty; of slight offences being punished by being buried up to chin in the sand, and nameless indignities perpetrated on them by their soulless jailers.

Two incidents I know of which show how deep the hatred of Biribi is by the unfortunate ones who have been there.

A man I knew well, ordinarily a quiet, mild mannered Berrichon,* spent every Sunday during the Exhibition 1900, and almost every moment of his spare time, at the main entrance on the Place de la Concorde, scanning the faces of all the men who went in. He was watching

* Central Frenchman.

for a certain sergeant who had been his tormentor and persecutor. For several years he had spent his time in a similar manner at the various stations. When asked what he intended to do, his invariable answer was: "All the world will know when I have done it," and he would add "O God! When will he come?—he is sure to come to Paris some day."

The other incident was a striking one, and came under my actual notice. In the engineering works a new man was started, when in the middle of the afternoon, someone who passed him, suddenly shouted: "It is Sergeant ———, of Biribi." Immediately there was a frenzied roar, and a rush of all hands in the workshop. He turned white, and looked around for a means of escape, and seeing an open window, made a dash for it, and succeeded in getting through, followed by a shower of tools and castings. He made straight for the street and rushed out terror-stricken. He never came again, though he had left his coat and tools. His coat was searched, and papers were found proving his identity, and also that he actually belonged to the secret police. Coat, tools and papers were placed on the forge fire and burnt amid shouts of exultation.

The men who are sent to Biribi and other military penal stations by the *Conseils de discipline* are those guilty of insubordination, but according to the statements of many soldiers the surest way there is to openly avow political opinions hostile to the bourgeois classes, or to be known to read the Socialist papers.

This may seem an extreme statement, and no one who has not actually passed through the French Army can speak with certainty on the matter, but in view of the general bitterness of class feeling, it seems to me a highly probable statement of the case.

It will, no doubt, come as a surprise to many Englishmen, even among those who have visited France, to learn that there is any great amount of bitterness between the working class and the wealthy class; but in this matter

there is a very remarkable paradox, as I will show in the succeeding paragraphs.

In the streets, in the omnibuses, trains, theatres, or in any public places, all Frenchmen and women are practically equal. There is one code of manners for all. The *camelot* selling laces expects to receive the same politeness as the wealthy banker. There is neither respect paid to rank and wealth, nor contempt displayed towards poverty and humility of station. So long as the relations of one to another are individual and casual, there is nothing to show that any division of class exists. But once let the contrast of class appear in the relations, and the virulence of expressions will show the true state of affairs. It is especially in the relations of employing and employed that this class war appears. It is but fair to say that left to his own instincts the French employer is really more humane, more willing to look upon each individual he employs as a human being, attached to him by something more than the mere cash nexus than his English prototype. But between his employees, as a whole, and himself, there is no sort of communion. He has no kind of sympathy with their class aspirations. In disputes there is rarely any attempt to compromise. No concessions are made, and, indeed, none are asked for. The strike in France is less an attempt to gain some advantage, than a movement of revolt against authority, a manifestation of hostility towards the capitalist class. The same thing is seen in their political and trade demonstrations. The speeches breathe a sentiment of hatred towards the bourgeoisie as a class never met with in this country, and I have had opportunities of learning that in the wealthier circles the workers are often spoken of *in the mass* as *la canaille* in the same contemptuous tones as we are accustomed to associate with the attitude of the pre-Revolution nobility towards their serfs.

I know of no other way of explaining this paradox than by the hypothesis that the humane and courteous feeling is the expression of the genuinely kind and

urbane real French character, whilst the *intransigent* attitude is the result of unnatural relations involved in the contradictions of the economic phase through which France, in common with other civilised countries, is passing. The whole atmosphere, in fact, a strange admixture of Republican equality, Feudal paternalism, and the soulless clash of interests typical of the Manchester School of Gradgrind & Co.

But it is not merely the class opposition in the industrial relations which strikes the close observer. A more remarkable fact is the wide gulf between the two classes in their social relations. I will recall to the reader the conversation with a French priest in the earlier part of this book: "They never meet, they never discuss things together." In England, we know that, with the exception of that exclusive section, known as "Society," all classes come more or less into contact. Politics and religion, sport, science, art (or what passes for such), provide a common ground, in which rich and poor, capitalist and artisan meet and see each other. The one class is often patronising and condescending, it is true, the other often servile, but still, they see somewhat of each other's life. The spectacle of a wealthy man inviting the delegates of a Trade Union Congress to a garden party, or a Mayor welcoming them to the City, fills the French artisan with amazement. He is far more used to being received at his conferences by the sight of streets lined with police and Republican Guards. Another manifestation of this wide gulf between the classes is found in the fact that few working men ever dream of clambering out of their class to which they belong. Once an *ouvrier*, always an *ouvrier*! And the children of the worker are always educated as workers, the artisan having a deep fear of his children becoming *déclassés*, that is, unfitted for his own sphere, and unable to get into any other. I once had the pleasure of being invited to the house of an eminent French *professeur*, who took a keen interest in all social questions; a number of people of the same class as himself were

present. These people one and all assured me, that so great was the gulf between the classes, that it was almost impossible for them even, who were in full sympathy with the workers' aspirations, to get a proper notion of the thoughts, feelings, and state of mind reigning in that class. In order to get a better state of information, the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes Sociales* arranged a course of lectures, to be given by workmen and the trade union officials to the *professeurs* and students of the schools. This course was very successful, and is, I believe, to be repeated every year. But then, of all sections of the bourgeoisie, the intellectual class is the least distrusted of any by the workers, so that after all the real bourgeoisie, the commercial and employing classes, still go on in permanent separation from the social life of those who create their wealth.

CHAPTER VIII.

In discussing the question of working class political parties, it will be well to understand that I mean those political parties whose actual membership and organisation is made up mainly of working men. Naturally, all political parties in France, as in any other democratic country, draw their support from the workers of one class or another. Thus the Monarchist rallies around him the agricultural population of Brittany and Auvergne. The Moderate Republican finds his strength in the peasant proprietors, and the, as yet, un-class-conscious workers in the many provincial towns. But the leadership, organisation and press of these parties are entirely in the hands of aristocratic or middle-class people, and it may be truly said that all the real working-class parties are more or less Socialistic, or, at any rate, anti-capitalistic, ranging as they do from Radical Socialist, State-Socialists, Marxists, to the *Parti Socialist Révolutionnaire*. The Anarchist school of workmen, disbelieving as they do in political action, cannot be classed as a party. In all the multitude of organisations organised for political purposes (their name is legion and to enumerate them would only confuse the uninitiated), I can only recognise two distinct political ideas, and the difference between them is rather one of procedure and tactics than of aim, though in one of them—the *Parti Socialiste Révolutionnaire*—there is great division of opinion on this very question of tactics, viz.: as to how far, if at all, the Socialist Party should co-operate with other parties in the government of the nation. The *Parti Ouvrier Français*, led by Jules Guesde and Paul Lafargue, are totally opposed to taking a part in forming a

Government, and looked upon the entry of Millerand in the Ministry as an act of treachery to the cause. During the late crisis, however—the revival of militarism during the Dreyfus affair—the great mass of the French workmen approved strongly of the action taken by the pair of Jaurès and Millerand, in what they considered practically saving France from a return to a military despotism. Many of them, however, were utterly disgusted at the inclusion of Gallifet into the Ministry, and looked upon this as an insult to the working class whose fathers and mothers that infamous general had murdered in the Commune in '71.

After his resignation, and the entry of General Andrieux in his place, the discussion continued on the matter of principle in the Socialist Party. I believe, that at the commencement, dazzled by the prospect of far-reaching reforms to be obtained by a Socialist Minister of Commerce, the mass of the workers were won over to the expediency of this move, especially after the brilliant advocacy of Jaurès in the *Petite République*. It is not to be wondered at, however, that the feeling has again grown very strong against the compromise, and also against Millerand himself. All thinking working men who believed that an energetic Socialist Minister might be of advantage to them, are utterly disappointed at the meagre results obtained, and I believe that the large number of abstentions in the last General Election were due to this feeling of disappointment. Not only was there no far-reaching Act passed, but even the influence of Millerand was not strong enough to prevent the growth of more stringent restrictions to the personal liberty of the workmen and their organisations.

The Marxist Party (*Parti Ouvrier Français*) are mainly strong in the North of France, and they claim to be opposed to helping in the administration of a bourgeois Government. I am inclined much to the opinion, however, that their *intransigence* is of very recent origin and results largely from the fact that they were not numerically strong enough to obtain a foothold in the

Ministry which undoubtedly saved France from a military dictatorship after the Dreyfus affair. The average working man in Paris is a great reader of newspapers, and the workmen of Socialist opinions generally read *La Petite République*, *Le Petit Sou*, or *L'Aurore*. The first-named paper is edited by Gérault-Richard, and has for principal contributor Jean Jaurès, who writes eloquent leading articles two or three times a week. All articles in French newspapers are signed. This paper has certainly the largest circulation of any among the industrial classes of Paris and other large towns. "*Le Petit Sou*" is (or was) the organ recognised by the Marxist Party, headed by Jules Guesde and Paul Lafargue. *L'Aurore* is by far the most literary paper. It takes an independent attitude in Socialist politics, and criticises freely all sections. After the famous Dreyfus affair (which seems to be an inevitable starting point for present-day politics) the paper was edited by Urbain Gohier, a man of undoubted ability, who did yeoman service in securing the revision of the case. He is an ex-Catholic, and a sudden convert to Freethought and Socialism. But, unfortunately, he seemed to distribute, in equal measure, a most bitter and personal enmity against his former colleagues on the one hand, and such of his present colleagues who differed with him on matters of detail on the other. He had around him as colleagues on the newspaper some of the most brilliant men of letters in France, such as Francis de Pressensé, Anatole France, while the feuilleton which ran through the paper at that time was one of the last famous novels from the pen of the late Emile Zola. Gohier was especially bitter against Jaurès, and seemed determined on driving him out of politics. He overstepped the mark at last in an article raking up all kinds of personal and private matters relating to the family life of the great orator. The impression created by this article in the minds of the French workmen was that Gohier himself was still in the pay of the enemies, and that his whole entry in the movement was a dark move-

on the part of the Jesuit fellowship to which he had belonged. This, of course, may be an absurd notion, but it was the general opinion. Jean Jaurès is certainly the most popular figure in French politics, and is greatly admired even by those who do not agree with his views or his policy, and this acrimonious diatribe by Gohier, dictated probably by jealousy, or personal animosity, wrecked the man himself, not only in the eyes of the workmen, but in the esteem of his colleagues, who all repudiated his articles, with the result that Gohier ceased to be connected with the *Aurore*, whether by resignation or otherwise I cannot say.

Political organisation is not at all carried on as in England. There are no workmen's political clubs, and the "groupes" as they are called are not numerically strong. The working-men voters in the mass do not belong to them, but only the militant Socialists among them. But in every workshop, and in every company of working men, there are always one or two of the militants, who educate and discuss with the mass, so that in the main they represent well the general opinion. The selection of a Parliamentary candidate is generally originated in these groups, and where there are groups belonging to different sections of the Socialist Parties, they will often select two or more candidates, but with an agreement to support the one obtaining the highest vote at the second ballot. In the last general election (1902) in one of the constituencies of Grenelle, the Socialist candidate was Chauvière, the Radical-Socialist was Chérioux, and there was a Clerical candidate.

At the first ballot the Clerical was at the top of the poll. During the contest Chérioux and Chauvière had attacked each other in a manner that would have dumfounded the electorate of Tipperary or Ballymooney. The epithets in common use between Orangemen and Irish Nationalist were mild and complimentary by the side of the accusations these two hurled at each other, and published on the walls. At the first ballot there was only a slight difference between the three candidates, Chauvière

being second. The very next morning the walls were covered by a bill in most affable language signed by Chérioux, and stating that in spite of slight differences between himself and M. Chauvière, they were agreed as to the necessity for keeping out the common enemy, and he asked all his supporters to vote for M. Chauvière at the second ballot. And a fortnight later M. Chauvière was elected by a vote equalling the double vote of himself and Chérioux on the first occasion. All of which goes to show that an Anglo-Saxon must not judge of what Frenchmen think of each other by what they say of each other on a public platform, and that English newspaper correspondents are apt to get very wrong impressions of the real state of mind of a people whose make-up is so different to that of our own matter-of-fact race. In many respects, the elections are much quieter than in England. There are no carriages or motor-cars, no canvassing, or house-to-house visitation with bills and literature. Every adult male is a voter and carries his *carte d'électeur* with him, often as a document to prove his identity. As there are practically no legal expenses of election and members are paid, the electors do not have to drain themselves to secure labour representation. The advertising and other expenses are not large, and are generally paid by the candidate himself if he is elected. The public meetings held are all "packed," *i.e.*, filled in advance by known supporters of the candidate, and nothing of the nature of free discussion goes on. Often attempts are made by the opposing party to break up the meetings. Demonstrations, that is street parades with musical and vocal accompaniments, are a feature, and when opposite factions meet they understudy Donnybrook fair. The candidates of the middle-class parties spend a good deal of time nursing their districts, and M. Chérioux, the Radical candidate, was a regular institution in Vaugirard-Grenelle. He was a curly-headed, red-faced, fussy little gentleman, of very genial manner. He was a retired builder and contractor, and spent most of his time in shaking hands with people

in the constituency. His name figured on every list of patrons of every kind of social institution—musical societies, gymnastic clubs, charity concerts. He was also a councillor, and as such was in great request at prize distributions, galas, fête committees, and in a word missed no opportunity of seeing the name of M. Adolphe Chéroux in print. He does not despair of entering the Chamber, but I think that in Grenelle he will have to change his colour, a by no means uncommon occurrence in French politics. It is one of the incidental dangers of payment of members, that politics attract many briefless barristers and glib-tongued adventurers, who will profess any opinion current in the district they wish to contest. That this danger can be guarded against, I know, and I believe that, in the main, the men selected by the workmen to represent their views are capable and sincere men. But if, instead of abandoning politics altogether, the workmen in the various unions were to select men from their trades known for good organisation work, to accompany the eloquent intellectuals who, for the most part, represent them now, they would secure more present-day reforms without losing any ground in attaining their ultimate ideal.

Reverting back to the question of the Press, one is struck by the freedom, extending even to licence, of the French newspapers. It is somewhat of an anomaly that in a country where police regulations limit on almost every side the citizen's freedom of action, the press should be practically free from any kind of censorship, and that it can publish, without fear, things which would involve even an English newspaper in ruinous litigation, and would cause the editor of a German or a Russian one an unpleasant period in a prison or a journey to Siberia. Contrast this freedom with the limits imposed on freedom of speech. Open-air meetings in the city are practically forbidden. No indoor meetings of any kind may take place without notification of the police authorities. All kinds of demonstrations in the open-air or in public places are accompanied by armies of

police who harass the people by all kinds of vexatious interferences. The result is that there is no spontaneous speaking of any kind, and no free discussion on questions of the day. Now, I wish at this point to make a digression with a view to demonstrating a lesson to English people, especially those in the advanced movement. There has been a tendency of late to depreciate the value of public speaking and speakers. A certain section of the press has often gone out of its way to decry orators, and to pooh-pooh the value of the human voice as an instrument of propaganda and public education. They have succeeded with a large number of their readers, in causing suspicion and distrust of some of the finest and most disinterested leaders and apostles. Their message has been that the only true way of public education is the printed word, and more particularly the print in their own columns. Now, I think it will be admitted by all, that personal freedom—the liberty of the individual to dispose of his person and arrange his movements as he wishes, so long as he injures none—is the very first requisite for happiness. The lesson I wish to impress therefore is this: that freedom of the press can be permitted together with an utter absence of individual freedom of expression of opinion, whereas by the very nature of things, freedom of speech must carry with it the absolute liberty of the subject. And freedom of speech will only be preserved so long as the habit of using that freedom is kept up. Again, the liberty to utter things in the press is the liberty of only a very few individuals, whereas the right to get a stool and stand in the market-place to deliver your message is within the power of any one to exercise. Of what use will government by Referendum be, if the people only think what they read in their newspapers. It is true we have not had in England of late any real attempt to prohibit free speech on the part of the authorities. But when one section of the public ridicules all speakers, and another section is permitted to howl down and brutally suppress speakers of opposite opinion, we are in danger of losing

that respect for liberty which prevents its legal suppression. Where would the editors of advanced newspapers fly to if their journals were suppressed? To the public platform, to the market-place, to Hyde Park, and Boggart Hole Clough! But what if free speech were already, thanks to their indifference, non-existent? Besides, a knowledge of history will tell us that the origin of the comparative freedom of Anglo-Saxon races is to be found in the open meetings of freemen in the ancient folk-motes, while, on the other hand, the absence of freedom of movement in France is largely due to the highly centralised government, where every village, however remote, is ruled by an official appointed from the capital. It is true that this bureaucratic form is sometimes beneficial to the village, but it is destructive to individual freedom. The practice of liberty of speech and free discussion makes for local autonomy; the habit of getting one's thoughts through the medium of a press association or a newspaper office on the Grands Boulevards, makes for undue centralisation.

This absence of unfettered public discussion is reflected in the character of the meetings themselves when, after the due formalities are observed, they take place. There is a pronounced atmosphere of intolerance. People of opposite opinions are not wanted at the meetings, and a question, or a sign of dissent, is instantly suppressed. They are not held for the purpose of conversion or propaganda. They are simply gatherings of the clans to inspire the faithful and possibly to educate them in the doctrines. This applies to all parties, and all kinds of gatherings, political, trade union, co-operative societies, and others. A debate between speakers of opposite opinions is impossible, it would be a pitched battle. Sometimes a *Conférence contradictoire** does take place within an organisation on some point of principle or policy. The section of society which is freest from this intolerance, and readiest to tolerate diversity of opinion

* Debate

in discussion, is the Anarchist section, who are, also, practically the only people who attempt to establish publicly the right of free meetings. (I again warn the reader that they have nothing in common with the perpetrators of outrages who are known to the daily press and the police by that name.) In the trade union and co-operative movement there are many signs of improvement in this particular. The strong commonsense, which is after all an underlying trait in the French character, is coming to the top, and enabling them to realise that the suppression of free expression on the part of the minority tends to produce insincerity, and is a source of weakness. Thus, in a discussion on, say, a strike, it is evident that if a good-sized minority is not allowed to express freely its dissent from the opinions of the initiators or leaders without being stigmatised as blacklegs or traitors, there is very little probability of coherence in the struggle when it takes place. Yet, such has often been the case, and I have even known men show an excess of zeal in agreeing with the popular side, lest their silence should be construed into dissent. But there are many signs of improvement, and in some of the unions business is carried on in as sober and matter-of-fact a manner as in any English society. I trust I shall not be suspected of British egotism, if I say that perhaps the increased relation with English trade unionism has had something to do with the improvement.

One of the most striking differences between the rank and file of the workers in the English and French political movements, is the absence of any definite and concrete knowledge of political theories among the French workmen. In England, though it is true the great mass of workmen are not students of political and economic theories, or even serious politicians, at any rate, among those who do take an interest in such matters, it is no uncommon thing to find men who have read widely and deeply in economics. Out of the thousands of French workmen I have met, I only remember two who had read any book dealing with economics. The names

of the great writers on Socialism, Marx, Engels, are but names to them recurring periodically in their newspapers. As to other writers on orthodox political economy, and the earlier founders of social theories, they know nothing of them. They could tell you all about Babœuf and Marat and the men of action of the great Revolution; they could give an account of the leaders and principal events of the Commune, but of *surplus-value*, the *economic basis of Socialism*, and the *historic evolution of modern capitalism* they know little indeed.

It must not, however, be thought that they are altogether ignorant as to what they want and how it may be realised. The plethora of good writers on their numerous papers fulfil the part of educators instead of books, and the net result is that whereas in England there is a small minority of deep students of social phenomena, and a large mass of people who, up to the present, are not even in touch with the general trend of Socialism, in France there are practically no students among the artisans, but almost all of them are, more or less, imbued with the ideals and sentiment of Socialism. In this, as in many other phases, France is the land of high general averages,* and few brilliant exceptions.

Such being the case, it is natural to expect that in France the people should pay more attention to the wider issues and the ultimate ideals, than to the practical immediate measures towards their realisation, and thus it is, while they seem to have little regard for municipalism and State control of monopoly, they are very warm in their opposition to militarism, and enthusiastic in the advocacy of Internationalism as a preliminary condition for the realisation of their social ideals.

Internationalism, the recognition of the unity of interests of the workers throughout the world, is always

* For instance, in general education, while the average French workman is better informed and more educated than the average Englishman, it is very rare to find a French artisan educated much above the average. The higher literature of France is a dead letter to the working-classes.

prominent in all speeches, demonstrations, and songs. The rallying song of Socialism is the "Internationale," and in all their songs the breaking down of frontiers appears. And truly, I believe they do as far as possible fraternise with any foreign workman as freely as they do with their own countrymen, especially if he is in sympathy with their ideas. But in spite of this the Frenchman is really a great lover of his own country, and though his opinion does not make him intolerant, he believes most earnestly in the mission of his country as leading nation in the march of civilisation. It is the exaggeration of this belief that makes the French chauvinist (or jingo) such an insufferable creature. It is somewhat unfortunate that the leading English newspaper representatives seem to come across so many of him, and mistake his bombastic and swash-buckling frothings for the genuine public opinion, which in the crises of the last few years has undoubtedly been on the side of peace and sweet reasonableness.

A little incident occurring on the 1st of May a few years ago illustrated the fact, however, that in spite of their internationalism the French workman enjoys the society of foreigners better when they are his guests, than when circumstances place him in the position of having to take a back seat among superior numbers of comrades from other nations. The foreign workmen of Paris, organised in groups, arranged for a May-Day Demonstration to be held at Chaville, and invited the French workers to join them. The year previous, owing to absence of initiative, no demonstration had been held at all, but this year the trade unions had also arranged a meeting at the Bourse du Travail. Now, Grenelle is a long way from the Bourse, and the men in the Grenelle workshops had agreed to go to Chaville. But it also happened that the funeral of Paule Minck, a well-known woman Socialist writer and speaker, took place that day, and as she lived at Auteuil, they all went first to see the start and then joined in the procession across the city to Père-la-Chaise Cemetery. The result

was that only about half-a-dozen French men and one woman arrived at Chaville. My wife and I were the only English people there. The meeting was held in a large café grounds in the centre of the woods (Chaville is a village about four or five miles south-west of Paris, in the forest of Meudon). It was a lovely place, and a beautiful day, and the presence of hundreds of men and women of all types and races made the scene truly impressive — Germans, Poles, Russians, Spaniards, Italians, and Belgians. The East was represented by one or two Japanese, and a few Creoles came to represent their far away West Indian home. They were, of course, not delegates, but simply foreign workmen resident in Paris. The few Frenchmen soon began to be uncomfortable. The French lady and her husband, to our great amusement (they were our neighbours), proposed to go back to Paris.

*"C'est tout comme si on était à l'étranger ; cela me donne la nostalgi,"** said Madame as she heard the babel of voices in barbarous foreign tongues. We prevailed on them to remain for a time and listen to the speeches, but as one after another spoke each in his own tongue, and songs were sung in every language but French, the *nostalgie* increased and they quietly slipped away, leaving the French contingent only five, who, though for the sake of their reputation they remained, were glad when the speeches were over and they were free to console themselves by adjourning to a déjeuner in the adjoining restaurant. For myself, I was glad of the opportunity of meeting so many different national types at close quarters, and studying the interpretation each of them gave to the common social ideal. Strange to say there was not a policeman present, and the walk home through the woods, with occasional rests and songs from the Polish Choir, was an illustration of the fraternity of nations such as I had never before seen.

* "It is just like being in foreign parts. It makes one feel homesick."

CHAPTER IX.

In examining the wide differences between the political attitude of French and English workmen there is one fundamental fact to be borne in mind, viz.: that in France the political awakening of the masses preceded their economic organisation, whereas in England the highly developed industrial organisations, such as the trade unions and co-operative societies, were formed in an atmosphere of political neutrality long before the introduction of a distinctly working-class political movement. As a matter of fact the trade unions in France are the direct outcome of the Socialist political movement, and the membership is almost confined to men having sympathies with the Communist ideal. I use the latter term advisedly, as I intend it to show that many of the members are not believers in Parliamentary action to attain their ideal.

We all know that in England, on the other hand, the entry of the trade unions, as such, into the political arena is of comparatively recent date, and it has needed the experience of the Taff Vale and other decisions against them to convince them of the necessity of independent political action. It is hard to say which is the most advantageous situation. In England there is this advantage, that during the last century, the trade unions have recruited their membership from men of all shades of political opinion or prejudice, and have created vast economic interests, covering all classes of labour, and in distinct antagonism to the capitalists' and landlords' vested interests. The political and social awakening of this mass finds them in possession of a mighty

weapon, of vast funds, and all the necessary machinery for promoting a rapid transition to a new and more scientific organisation of industry. In France, on the other hand, the sharp political divisions have a tendency to keep outside the economic organisations, *i.e.*, trade unions and co-operative societies, all who do not share the ideas predominating among the majority, thus leaving outside a large section of the proletariat capable of being used against them by the enemies of the workers.

That these have not failed to realise this weakness may be seen by the creation of the "Syndicat Jaunes," or Catholic trade unions, whose principles, however, are more in harmony with the Free Labour Associations than with trade unions. On the other side of this, however, we have the advantage that the French trade unions realise from the outset that the real object of their industrial organisation is to create the machinery for the future management of social production. Nevertheless, in the more highly skilled trades, and notably in the engineering and metal trades, the basis of the trades unions is tending to become more and more like that of the English organisations, and their objects are rather to protect themselves and secure the best possible advantages to their members in the present industrial system. I have before me at the present time a membership card and book of rules of the "Union des Mécaniciens." Except for a few details, it is almost a model of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers of this country. For effective defensive purposes, however, its funds cannot be compared with the English society. The subscriptions are low, 1 f. 50 c. a month (about 1s. 3d.). Previous to 1900 it was only 1 f., and the tendency is to increase it. That at least is, I know, the intention of the Executive Committee and the active members. They give out-of-work pay 2 f. a day for four weeks, beginning only a fortnight after stopping work. Strike pay is at the rate of 3 f. 50 c. a day (about 3s.). They also give a monthly sum to their members doing military service, varying according to the state of a special fund for this

purpose. I know personally the Secretary and other officials of this Society, and I believe it is admirably managed, and I know it has been able to considerably raise the status of its members in the trade. Their monthly meeting of members in Paris is orderly and business-like, and would compare well with any similar English meeting. This Union runs an admirable four-page monthly paper.

Many of the other trade unions, however, are founded on quite different principles. Their avowed aim is the organisation of the workers on an industrial basis, each according to his trade, for the purpose of preparing for the economic revolution. The principal, almost the sole item of their propaganda is the General Strike. These unions are federated together and run a weekly paper to propagate their ideas. It is in these unions that are found many of the non-political workmen; non-political, not in the sense in which our older English unions are non-political, because of the diversity of political colour amongst their members, but in the sense that they do not believe in politics at all, but organise with a view to ushering in a new order of society by means of a general cessation of labour for profit and a reorganisation of industry for use. It is not within my province here to either criticise or approve of their method, but I must state that this propaganda has gained great numbers of adherents of late among all classes of French artisans. Generally speaking, the members of these bodies describe themselves as Anarchists; though in justice it must be said that they have absolutely nothing in common with what is understood as Anarchism by the police and by the timid section of the public. They would be better described by the term voluntary Communists, in opposition to the political Socialists. But the police seem unable to understand the distinction, and bestow an inordinate and useless amount of attention to the Bourse du Travail, where these unions hold their meetings. I have said that the propaganda of the General Strike has gained a great deal of ground lately, and what it

has gained has been lost to political Socialism. I am convinced, however, that the workers of Paris have not turned against political action because they believe political action bad in itself, but simply because those who have represented this action in the French Chamber have not shown sufficient political acumen and genius to justify the proletariat in according them further confidence. This may seem a hard criticism, but looking at the numbers of the deputies representing working-class opinion, and their undoubted forensic ability and influence, the effect they have had in bettering the condition of the workers has been trivial. It is an unpardonable anomaly for a party, which has been powerful enough to place a member in the Ministry, and is now strong enough to keep its leader in a high official position, to confess that it cannot secure its members from all kinds of petty and harassing infringements of personal liberty, such as would drive into open rebellion the dullest and most servile section of our English peasantry. When M. Loubet triumphed over his enemies on the occasion of the great demonstrations at Longchamps after the Dreyfus verdict, it was admitted on all hands that the greatest share in the victory was due to the splendid Republican loyalty of the workmen's organisations; and the Prime Minister himself, M. Waldeck-Rousseau declared that the Government would henceforward look upon the banners of the unions as symbols of the front line of Republican defence, to be saluted by all honourable citizens, and not execrated as symbols of disorder. And yet only a few short months after, the same banners were torn from the walls of the Bourse du Travail by the hands of the minions of M. Lépine, Chief of Police, and he was under the direct control of M. Waldeck-Rousseau. The object of the meeting at which this incident occurred was a most pacific one. When certain newspapers on both sides of the Channel were doing their best to provoke a quarrel between England and France, a delegation of French trade unionists came to England to express to their English

colleagues their utter dissent with this Anglophobia. On their return they were to give an account of their reception by the English trade unionists. For this purpose they had met in the large hall of the Bourse du Travail, and a crowded audience of all classes of workmen were present. The outside front of the hall was decorated with various coloured lanterns and with the union banners (since the Longchamps demonstration a decree had been passed permitting the display of these harmless colours!). But hardly had the meeting started when a bevy of police made their appearance, and placing ladders against the walls, mounted and tore down the banners and the *red* lanterns. One can scarcely conceive of so childish and petty an action being ordered even by a country constable, much less by the Chief of Police of the world's capital. Immediately, of course, there was a hubbub and a scuffle, but on rushing to the doors the people found that the adjacent Place de la République was filled with thousands of soldiers, Gardes Républicaines, and police, bayonets fixed, sabres drawn, and ominous rattle of musketry, and all because of a few paper lanterns and pieces of red cloth. Batch after batch of over-bold workmen, who stepped outside the Bourse were carried off to the lock-up, and were charged on the morrow with absurd attacks on the police doing their duty. The most curious part of it was that the meeting itself was allowed to proceed, thus showing that there was no reason at all for these unprecedented precautions (!) Thanks to the coolness of one or two of the leaders, the meeting resumed, not however to hear the report of the delegates to England, but to discuss the situation. Many of the speakers used the occasion to show the uselessness of political action, when the presence of Millerand in the Cabinet could not protect them from such an outrage. But there were many friends of Millerand there, and they urged patience, stating that probably M. Lépine had acted on his own, and that assuredly he would be called to account on the morrow. Their confidence was misplaced, as beyond a mild inter-

pellation in the Deputies, nothing was done to punish or reprimand the authors of the outrage, and moreover from that date began a series of similar incidents, showing, if the workman may be believed, a worse state of affairs in respect to personal liberty than existed under the reactionary Governments. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that this incident has done more than anything else to drive men away from constitutional political methods of reform. It has also accounted more than anything else for the decline of Millerand himself in popular favour. Many of the leaders who spoke in his favour at that famous meeting are now earnest advocates of the General Strike, and decry *all* political action as futile. No doubt this is a great misfortune, as it incidentally plays the game of the Clerical and Reactionary party, but who can blame intelligent men for thinking that a party unable to secure even the first elementary principles of personal liberty for the people, is scarcely likely to secure them any far-reaching social or economic reforms?

Just as Trade Unionism in France must be taken as part and parcel of the general Socialist movement, so also with the co-operative movement. It must be realised that outside the section of the people who are aiming at a complete change in the economic basis of society, co-operation has practically no existence. Though it is true that even in England the movement in the first half of the nineteenth century aimed at complete social regeneration, we now must recognise that it has long since abandoned that ideal. The English co-operative movement, in the main, accepts the present organisation of society, and, at its best, only aims at lifting up the economic position of its members in this society. This abandonment of the earlier ideal, while it has depreciated its value in the eyes of those who looked to it as a means of social regeneration, has no doubt strengthened considerably its actual economic position by enabling it to recruit its members from all classes and all shades of opinion. The only consideration

for the bulk of the members, is their own actual benefit by becoming adherents. It is a point worthy of discussion as to which is the best ultimately: To create vast economic interests affecting the welfare of the mass of the workers, as in English trade unions and co-operative societies, and wait until the force of events drives them into politics for self-defence or advantage to their interests; or to educate the mass of the workers into accepting the social sentiment or ideal, which will induce them to organise economically for its realisation.

It is the second method which has had sway in France, and the result is, that while their political consciousness is highly developed, their economic organisations are few and weak.

The co-operative movement in France is almost confined to numbers of small and isolated societies, which, however, are now federated in groups and regions. Productive co-operation is more developed, comparatively, than in England, especially co-operative bakeries. France has been the experimenting ground of many philanthropic attempts at co-partnership, and excellent as is the work of such institutions as Godin's Familistère at Guise, and other similar ones, they can scarcely be classed as of working class origin and creation. The productive societies are often initiated by the trade unions, though one or two of the bakeries in Paris are the direct outcome of distributive societies. The distributive societies aim more at low prices and the creation of funds for educative purposes than at a division of profits. All the distributive societies sell wine and other spirituous liquors; indeed most of them have a bar attached to the store, which is largely patronised by the men. The management is very democratic, and the relations between the members are of a very fraternal order. Within the limits of their means they are very generous in their help of workmen on strike, and in cases of exceptional distress. Much of their utility and progress is hampered by the red-tape Government regulation and interference with the free disposal of their resources.

The attitude of French workmen to the police is incomprehensible to the average Britisher, accustomed as he is to looking to this familiar official as the friend and protector of the people. In our London streets, in our parks, at our demonstrations, and everywhere in fact, we look upon the man in blue as the symbol of peace and order. It is true we have had our Trafalgar Square "riots," and occasional petty interference in days gone by with the right of public meetings, and so on. But all these incidents have generally and rightly been ascribed to some muddle-headed magistrate or member of the Watch Committee, and have not been placed to the account of the policeman. But in France there is war—constant, fierce, relentless war between the police and the workmen. It is no exaggeration to say that the "flique" (police-agent) is the most execrated person in France, in the minds of the organised workmen, not even excepting the priest. When the police take the form of "mouchards" or secret police, the hatred exhibited towards them knows no bounds. And yet, as far as the regular police are concerned, every foreigner visiting France will testify to the never-failing courtesy of these officials, a courtesy extending even to kindness towards anyone in a difficulty. Let the same foreigner, however, get employment in a French workshop, and take his part in the ordinary life of the workman there, and he will soon arrive at the same state of mind as the native comrades. I can only explain this difference by saying that in his relation towards the foreigner or the general public, the policeman acts as a Frenchman, with the genial urbanity of his race, which will not allow even the most hardened reprobate to be other than courteous and obliging in his ordinary relations with the world, whereas towards the workers in their class-conscious form he acts as a zealous servant of an antagonistic bureaucracy, obsessed with the idea that the surest way to repress popular discontent is to harass and terrify the workers into submission. But it may be asked, why this animosity towards the individual policeman, and why

this zeal on his part towards the working-class? The reason given is that the police are chosen from a class not generally in sympathy with the workers, viz., from the *re-engagés* or men who have re-engaged for a longer term of military service, non-commissioned officers who have been through a school of training in the art of bullying those placed under them. Whatever the real reason is, the fact remains that while you come across the shady parts of Paris in the dead of night, in fear and trembling lest some of the criminal bands should slash you to pieces and take your purse and watch, you will not meet a single policeman, and may cry in vain for help if attacked; on the other hand you may go into the genuine workmen's quarters where life and property are safe and crime unknown, and you will find the police hanging around the café doors, lounging about the "Universités Populaires" or workmen's clubs, ready to pounce on any unfortunate who might utter somewhat too loudly any revolutionary sentiment, or speak in uncomplimentary terms of the powers that be. It is no wonder then that, rightly or wrongly, the workers accuse the police of being in league with the marauding bands, and levying toll on their earnings and on those of the unfortunate women attached to them. This constant presence of the police and of their allies, the *mouchards*, has a very baneful effect on the character of workmen's organisations. It breeds all kinds of suspicion and distrust, and contributes to stifling free discussion, as many fear to take up an independent critical attitude owing to the danger of being accused as a spy or a paid disturber of the harmony of the society.

The great event of the year for witnessing the open antagonism between the police and the masses is the annual demonstration at Père Lachaise cemetery, on the anniversary of the crushing of the Commune on May 27th. The Mecca of the monster procession is the Mur des Fédérés, a blank wall on the north-east side of the famous cemetery, under the shadow of which remain the bodies of thousands of men, women and children, near

relatives of the present generation, who were shot down and buried in quicklime by the orders of the infamous Gallifet, acting for his master, Thiers. From every quarter of Paris, from every village in the Banlieue, from all the stations of Paris the people come pouring along the boulevards towards Ménilmontant. In every group there are a number of wreaths of red cloth and immortelles bearing inscriptions: "To the Martyrs of the Commune," "To the Sowers of the Seeds," "To our Parents who Died for us," and so on. The procession forms along the Boulevard de Ménilmontant and every now and again burst out verses of the "Carmagnole," the "Internationale," and the "Insurgé"; and occasional cries of "*Vive la Commune*," "*Battue mais pas vaincue*." But this does not go on long. M. Lépine is there in charge of thousands upon thousands of his police, aided by the whole force of the Republican Guards. He is buzzing about like an angry wasp, yelling "Stop the singing," "Stop the shouting," "Officer, take this man," "Officer, take away that wreath, the motto is too violent." At the gate of the cemetery, a large posse is stationed, and allowing only a small number to go in at once, and all along the alleys, behind every stone and monument, stand detachments of armed men. The groups of processionists are turned up this way and that, in order to disperse them as much as possible and prevent any large accumulation of workmen in one place. At last group after group pass in, hang up their wreaths on the wall which is literally draped for a hundred yards or so, or pile them on the grass. No speaking or singing is allowed there, but choking sobs from many an older man or woman who remembers a dear one, cannot be suppressed. Any daring one who transgresses the regulations of M. Lépine is immediately seized and dragged away to the police station, which must be pretty full before the procession is over. After they pass the wall, many pay visits to the tombs of Blanqui and Flourens. The procession lasts six or seven hours and as many as half a million people have passed through the cemetery to renew

their inspiration from the sacred spot where the Commune fought its last battle. As long as M. Lépine lives there is no fear of the demonstration dying out. He does his best to give a realistic effect to the truth that the police and the standing army exist in Paris for the purpose of protecting capital from a supposed second rising of the Commune. I have had the opportunity of seeing M. Lépine in his private life, and he seemed to me there a mild-mannered, worthy gentleman, proud of his children, kind and affectionate. But in his official capacity (and I have seen him many times) one cannot imagine a more irascible, excitable fire-eater. His very appearance and conduct is enough to turn the most peaceful crowd into a riotous mob. I am confident that no Parish Council in England would entrust such a man to preserve order at a mothers' meeting or a Sunday-school tea party. I cannot conceive by what means he has arrived at the head of the police of a great and enlightened Republic. *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*. What a mockery does this man make of this beautiful motto, especially of its first word, without which the others are impossible. When will the French authorities learn that, even in the interest of the propertied classes, the best way of preserving order, is to avoid even the appearance of expecting disorder? If there was not a single policeman in Paris on the 27th of May, the demonstration would pass off as peacefully as a cricket match at Lord's. Does it need a foreigner to tell them that theirs is the most peaceful and easily-managed people on the earth if they were only given the mere appearance of liberty and the very shadow of justice?

CHAPTER X.

In all the previous chapters I have dealt essentially with the artisan classes, ranging, say, from the skilled engineer to the mason's labourer, and I may well imagine any English reader asking what of the lower grades, what of the submerged tenth, the residuum? With a considerable amount of truth one might answer that there is no submerged tenth, that the absolutely hopeless misery and squalid poverty, which is such a feature of our East End and the slums of our large cities, does not exist in France, not even in Paris. The answer would not be quite true, as one would have to make exception of the criminal classes, and of those who make a living out of sexual degradation. These, however, are of all ranks and classes, and can scarcely be dealt with as forming part of the labouring population. Taking these apart, however, the above answer is substantially true. Throughout the labouring population there are many gradations of comfort and discomfort, but as you go further down in the scale of well-being, you do not reach a class lost to a sense of decency and self-respect. In fact, whatever be the economic position, the character and standard of moral life does not seem to appreciably alter. Take for the instant the *camelot* or hawkers, the man who lives from year end to year end, by a thorough knowledge of the thousand-and-one ways of picking up a living in the requirements of each season, and of the numerous events of the year. His stock occupation is the selling of newspapers (men, not boys), but his harvest days are Shrove Tuesday and Mid-Lent,

when he sells *confetti* and *petits balais*, July 14 when he sells colours and tricolour ribbons. There are many varieties of the *camelot*, but wherever you meet them and get into touch with them you will find the same cheerful disposition, the same courtesy, and the same alert intelligence that you notice in other ranks of the little people of Paris. The rag-pickers are a feature of Paris. Here in this unsavoury occupation you would not expect to meet the highest standard of comfort and of enjoyment in life. But if you look for a lower standard than the average you would be agreeably disappointed. The fact is, this calling is organised into a very complete guild with very stringent rules. Its members claim for the guild great antiquity. The different groups of *chiffonniers* (rag-pickers) live in little colonies in various parts of Paris. The most important one is in Grenelle, in the long country-like street leading to the Seine close to the station of Grenelle (Ceinture.) Go and see them there and you will be delighted with the pleasant appearance of their quarter. You would never dream that this quiet country hamlet was Paris. The work of these rag-pickers is divided into districts and there is no overlapping. Every morning each housewife in the city deposits her refuse in the large tin boxes provided for each house (*poubelles* they are called, after M. Poubelle, chief of police when they were instituted). These boxes stay on the edge of the pathway until the refuse carts come round about 9 a.m., but before they come, the rag-picker comes round scraping and turning over everything with his iron hook and taking possession of every scrap of metal, rag, bone, paper, everything in fact except vegetable refuse and ashes. All these they take home and turn to account in some mysterious way. Nothing is wasted in Paris. The extreme economy of every section of the people finds its apotheosis in the final economy of this industrious army of *chiffonniers*.

Another class of workers who deserve notice are the *marâchers*, or market gardeners, all around Paris, who

supply the city with the mountains of vegetables which grow in a night at the Halles, and disappear before the sun is high in the heavens. From my room window I could see several of these gardens, and the industry and skill is most amazing. What struck me most was the amount of labour and the number of labourers each little plot of land seemed to occupy. Early and late you see them bending over their work in all seasons of the year, and if it be true that the soil of England is the most productive in the world, as specialists in agriculture often tell us, then there can be no doubt as to whether the land can produce food for its millions, as these French market gardeners seem to raise crops while you wait. They take their own produce generally to the Halles, and here in early morning you will see thousands of carts, barrows, and trucks, bringing the fruits of the seasons, or taking them away to the minor markets, or to sell in the streets on barrows.

In dealing with the artisans, I stated that by far the greater number in Paris were provincials, but in all the multifarious callings classed under the name of *camelots*, you generally meet with your true Parisian, who has a mortal hatred of being closed between four walls, or timed by a bell.

Your true Parisian is a vivacious, alert, and witty character, much given to joking and raillery, very independent, demanding help from none. He is best described by his own adjective *débrouillard*, that is to say, full of resource, ready to get out of scrapes and difficulties, which, however, he is equally ready to get into. Politics or religion he knows not, or rather, he knows them too well and is ready to give his voice, as occasion demands, to either side. "*Vivent les bonnes sœurs*," or "*Vive l'Anarchie*" come all as one to him. Generally, however, he is a Nationalist, and for the last few years his war cry has been "*Vive l'Armée*." He is always much in evidence, and as many of them pick up their living around the stations from English visitors, it is unfortunately his irresponsible chatter and nonsense:

which Cook's tourists take back with them as the opinion of the working classes of Paris, what time the real workers in the faubourgs never come under the eyes of *milord* John Bull.

The great opportunity of the Parisian casual worker is when the Exhibition comes round, or when some big event demands extra employment where perquisites form part of the remuneration. When Barnum and Bailey's show visited Paris in the winter of 1900, several hundreds of Frenchmen were employed as doorkeepers, labourers, ushers, &c. These were enrolled by their local agent from this class of men, who hold themselves ready at his service to act as theatrical supernumeraries, and odd men on all occasions of this kind. I had occasion to act several times there as interpreter between the management and the men, and had a good opportunity of observing them. The managers told me that they were a different type of men to what they had met in any other country. They were quick, ready to understand what was wanted in that gigantic clockwork organisation, but they were irrepressible in their desire to drive a business on their own account inside the firm.

The fact is the *ouvreuse* and ushers in French theatres and places of amusement have certain well recognised privileges, and not for all America and the Americans were they going to forego them, and after many attempts to reduce them to the position of automata, the management gave it up, made the best of the material, and tacitly allowed them to extort substantial remuneration from the visitors in return for such services as the provision of cushions for the children, footstools for the feet of Madame, imaginary good places for the visitors from the country. And when the wife and children or other relatives of the ushers came in, it was taken as a matter of course that they should be placed in the best seats. Jules is willing to work long hours, he is willing to do all sorts of supplementary work ungrudgingly, but he is not willing to give up his sacred rights of acting as

a human being with the freedom of the city when occasion arises. And in all this the public was with them, so there was nothing for it but to gracefully give way, which I believe is almost a heroic action for an American.

From the workers of all grades to the real residuum there is a wide gulf, and probably the sections of this latter which loom biggest in the public eye are the famous nocturnal bands who terrorise the belated citizens on their way from the city to the outer districts. Scarcely a morning but the press gives an account of some of their operations, and a remarkable thing is the number of *garçons de café* (waiters) who are the victims of these robberies with violence. These employees are remunerated entirely by tips, and those employed in the larger cafés have to pay substantial sums in the morning before they start, so that on their way home they have always on them their earnings plus this sum for the morrow's deposit, and this is the temptation for the bandits. It seems incredible to speak about the existence of this terror in an enlightened and civilised city like Paris, but in my opinion there is absolutely no serious attempt on the part of the police to put them down. On one occasion a number of these gentry began to infest one of the most respectable working class districts of Grenelle. The police made no move at all in the matter, and at last a number of the workmen made up their minds to clear them from the quarter. They formed themselves into patrols and at last dropped across a small army of a score or so young hooligans, arrayed in proper bandit fashion, and armed to the teeth. They were speedily dispatched, however, and severely drubbed, and were no more heard of in the district.

The Press, too, is largely responsible for their growth by devoting columns of descriptive matter to their doings, and to the *personnel* of their captains. A few years ago one of these celebrated bands, by name "The Apaches of Belleville," held in terror the whole of that district. But at last the captain and his lieutenant fell out and vowed mortal enmity to each other. The *casus belli*:

was the love of a certain fair creature, who was known by the name of Casque d'Or. The band split up, and carried on a perpetual feud with revolvers and knives, to the consternation of the residents. One after another of the men were wounded and picked up by the police, but none could be induced to give up their leaders or even their opponents. The Press interviewed them, lionised them, exhibited their portraits and ravishing descriptions of this modern Helen of Troy. At last one of the leaders was wounded and picked up. Casque d'Or came to console him and gave herself into the hands of the police, and immediately all sections of the Press, including such sober journals as *Le Matin*, went into hysterics over her devotion. The trial was attended by many of the grand monde, who probably were, just then, without any new toy. The sentences for this serious breach of the peace were very slight; the lady was let off as having no part in the business. She was immediately engaged to appear on the stage, at a theatre on the Boulevard Sebastopol, I believe. She was pointed out to me some time afterwards on the front of a show at the great fair of Neuilly. Gallantry forbids me to criticise, but I am no Don Quixote and I really cannot rhapsodise about her. But after the notoriety they obtained it is no wonder that all the captains fell to quarrelling with their lieutenants about the amours of their fair followers, until at last the public were nauseated and demanded something new.

But when the energies of M. Lépine and his men are so used up by trying to gag the workers and repress the forces of social evolution, one can scarcely expect him to have an efficient patrol of the streets at nights. One can scarcely expect him to guard at one and the same time the theoretic rights of property, and the real and personal property and life of the citizens.

CHAPTER XI.

Before closing this examination of the state of mind of the French working-classes, I intend to briefly review several incidental questions which affect their welfare. As these are somewhat disconnected, I will treat of them under separate headings. The first one of these is the system of

CUSTOM HOUSES AND INDIRECT TAXATION.

Every French town of importance has a system of *octrois* or Custom Houses for the purpose of levying taxes for local expenditure on all kinds of goods coming into the city. This is the logical outcome of the system of Protection on the national frontier. There is no doubt that these internal duties have a very detrimental effect on the industry of the nation, and the working of the system of Protection can be seen here on a small and easily examined scale. A year or two ago the municipality of Paris took the duty off wine, and immediately the price of wine went down to from twopence to threepence on each litre, a sum actually larger than the percentage of tax previously existing, thus showing that the tax increased the price of the commodity by more than its value, which is natural enough, seeing the vast army of officials the system seems to need. Again, the price of petroleum (which is the usual illuminant) is 60 centimes within the gates of Paris, whilst just outside at Vanves or Levallois-Perret, it is only 40 centimes the litre. The difference is again more than the amount of the tax. But in spite of these and many other inconveniences,

I did not find among the workers any perceptible feeling for the abolition of this system of internal taxation any more than against the national system of tariffs. What does exist, however, is considerable discussion and feeling as to the particular commodities which should or should not be taxed. It is largely a war of sectional interests, sugar against wine, wine against oil, and so on. The general economic aspect of the question rarely enters into the discussion. But then, one of the evil effects of these artificial barriers is that they obscure wide economic issues by creating a variety of antagonisms between those who benefit and those who suffer by them. And those who benefit are generally those who possess the power and influence. In spite of the keen interest taken by all classes in politics, there is, however, a woe-ful lack of economic knowledge among the people. As an instance, large numbers of people during the winter, when work is bad to get, advocated the provision of work in pulling down the earthworks around Paris, though it was admitted that there was absolutely no utility in the work itself. These earthworks are of no value now from a military point of view, but they form a boulevard and breathing space around the city. In many parts these grass covered mounds are useful as recreation grounds, and would be an actual loss if removed. It is difficult to see what would be gained by their removal, especially when the actual relief the work would give to the unemployed could be *given* for nothing at half the cost. It is the same want of economic knowledge that impels many to defend the system of Protection and *octrois*, on the ground of the *number of persons it employs*.

EFFICIENCY OF WORKMEN AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION.

Unless one were an expert in all kinds of trades and callings one could not pronounce on the efficiency of workmen as a class, but speaking of the one that came most under my notice—engineers—my opinion is that the French workman is very highly efficient and works very hard to get to know the whole theory and practice

of his calling. Many mechanics are equally skilled as turners, fitters, draughtsmen, or markers, and most of the workmen refuse to be satisfied with mere skill of hand, but become acquainted with the *technique* and theory of their art. Their natural artistic instinct also causes them to take a pride in their work, and devote much energy to the finish and appearance of their manufactures. A high degree of sub-division of labour, reducing the artisan to the continual production of one part of a machine, is almost impossible in France, as the French workmen stigmatise such labour as "*brutalisant*" (brutalising). To a very large degree the high efficiency of the workmen is due, however, to the system of apprenticeship, or rather to the spirit in which the system is carried out. The general term of apprenticeship is three years, from 15 to 18, and French industrialism, whatever its other faults, does not seem to have fallen to the pitch of exploiting its apprentices by transforming them for the large part of their service into supplementary labourers. During the whole of the time he is *taught* his trade, under the care of a skilled man or a foreman. The first few months are spent in getting acquainted with the uses of the various tools and the nature of the materials. At no time is his work supposed to be productive of profit to the firm, and in many places the finishing period is occupied by the apprentice in making a whole set of tools in the employer's time and with his material. I knew one apprentice personally for the major part of his time, and when he finished his term of service he showed me a beautiful case of mechanical instruments which he had made, including compasses, squares, and a splendid millimetre slide rule, which he had himself graduated. As to their correctness, the foreman said that the production of these tools as his own work was better than any written certificate of efficiency he could give him.

In all the large towns there is a technical school, which sometimes holds good instead of apprenticeship. In Paris, the best school of this kind is the *École*

Diderot on the Boulevard de la Villette, devoted principally to various branches of the metal trades, and also joinery, model-making, and plumbing. This school is not merely an institute for teaching the rudiments and theory of a trade, but is a regular apprenticeship school (it is, in fact, generally known as l'Ecole d'Apprentissage), and the boys who go through the courses there come out finished workmen, with, in addition, a valuable technical education. This institution was visited by the English delegates to the Metallurgical Congress in 1900, and their report emphatically declared that the young man coming from this school was better equipped for getting a living by his trade than the apprentice from a private firm. The school was founded in 1873 and is maintained by the municipality of Paris. The boys enter at the age of 13. The tuition is absolutely free, but the scholar must pass an examination to enter. This consists of dictation, arithmetic, geometry, drawing, and a composition on a technical subject. The school hours for the first two years are from 7.45 to 6 p.m., and the last year from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. About seven hours are spent in learning the trade and the remainder in classes. Dinner is provided at a small charge (50 centimes, or, in cases of necessity, free). The classes consist of French, geography, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, theoretical mechanics, drawing, hygiene.

The articles manufactured in this admirable school are not sold, but are used by the municipality. The equipment of the school is as perfect as money can make it. In every branch there is an instructor to 30 boys. The appearance of these workshops with the miniature workmen in their blue blouses and overalls is an education in itself.

When a young man finishes his apprenticeship, whether in a private firm or the school, he generally works for a year or so as a "petite main" or improver, to get experience. On day work he will get much less than the fully equipped workman, but on piece-work he may earn just as much as they do. At the age of 20, how-

ever, he generally counts himself entitled to the full remuneration. The old system of making the "*Tour de France*" (*i.e.* of working his way round all the principal centres of industry in France in order to get experience) is dying out in most highly skilled trades. It still exists in many of the outdoor and building trades.

PHYSIQUE OF THE FRENCH WORKPEOPLE.

It is very common to hear people who have never been to France, refer in pitying terms to the degeneracy of the French, and when a leading statesman in England commits himself to a public statement on the same lines, there is no wonder at the prevalence of the idea. That celebrated advocate of the "new diplomacy," however, only voiced an ignorant prejudice in order to glorify the idea of Anglo-Saxon expansion for the benefit of humanity at large, whereas many seem to accept this as an absolute fact. And yet, a year or so ago, I happened to be riding on an omnibus when I found my neighbour to be an Englishman. Subsequently, I learned that he was a retired officer, and that he had been making a prolonged tour in different parts of France. I asked him what feature of the French people struck him most during his travels. He answered: "The intense vitality and tremendous reserve strength of the people, especially the workpeople." I was somewhat surprised at this from a man of his class, though I thoroughly agreed with him. Guessing my thoughts, he added: "I came to France two years ago with the exactly opposite notion, that is, that France was a played-out race. I now see that with the exception of certain neurotic portions of the metropolis, France is a giant at rest. The events of the last century have shaken its frame. What some have taken for dying tremors are really the vibrations of the nerves after the great work of breaking its chains. The history of France is in the future, not in the past."

It was a generous speech, but I believe it is substantially true. And one must recognise that this could not be true of a country if the physique of the workpeople

was in anyway degenerating. I have no official figures to go upon respecting death rates, diseases, and so on. But I believe that these figures if I had them would be useless, unless figures relating to England were obtainable, collected according to the same system, and with the same degree of accuracy or otherwise. Failing these, the only way of arriving at a conclusion is by a fairly wide personal observation in both countries, and with this as a guide, I declare that for general health and bodily strength the French workpeople compare very favourably with our own people, to say the least. Without committing myself definitely on the point, my own impression is that *average* French physique is higher than the English. Fewer giants and fewer dwarfs, but a higher general average. One noticeable thing is their freedom from minor diseases. Bad teeth are rarely met with, but that and the general good health is undoubtedly due to the more scientific manner of cooking and the better food. The great fact which misleads opinion in this country is the low birth rate. Before drawing conclusions from this it will be well, however, to bear one thing in mind, viz., that though the general birth rate is low, there are very few married persons who have *no* children, though families of one, two, and three are the rule. This is a very important fact, and another is that as a rule in families of several children there is generally a period of several years between each child. This points not to any wide-spread sterility, but to the existence of a general conscious limitation of families which to my own knowledge is very common. Though this is not the place to discuss it, it is an open question whether this is a mark of a vicious tendency or of a high degree of civilisation. One thing, however, is certain, it is the outcome, not so much of the teaching of Malthusianism, as of the general prudence of the race, their unwillingness to incur responsibilities they cannot discharge. To compare the physique of the two races further would need scientific data which is not, I believe, at present in existence. Taking observations from large numbers of workpeople

from various industrial districts in England and France, would, I believe, be a very instructive process, and I should not be surprised if the result was a severe shock to our national complacency.

CHAPTER XII. AND CONCLUSION.

In going through the impressions of the French people, the reader may well ask himself whether the picture is not largely coloured by the writer's own personal predilection for the French people. That I am a sincere admirer of our neighbours I am bound to confess. But by way of justification, I may say that whatever their faults, and they are many, their virtues and general characteristics are such as endear them to anyone who has had a long contact with them, and the opportunity of making numerous acquaintances and personal friendships among them. As witness to this, I refer any critics to numerous writers who have dealt with France and the French after long residence in the country. I know of none who specially treated of the industrial classes as I have attempted to do, but I know of several who have borne witness in the same manner about their general character. Particularly do I refer the reader to the following:—The books of P. G. Hamerton (especially "Round my House," treating of rural France), the novels of George Du Maurier, especially "The Martian," an article in the *Fortnightly Review* of April, 1903, entitled "Thirty Years in Paris," by J. G. Alger. There is also another little book which I have just had the pleasure of reading since writing the major part of this book, and which is a veritable pæan of praise of our neighbours. It is "Town and Country Life in France," by Hannah Lynch, and is one of "Our Neighbours" series published by George Newnes.

To sum up these characteristics in words is no easy task. It is not so much any special virtue, as a general atmosphere which gives pleasure and excites kindly feeling. Specially it is the readiness of everyone to enter sympathetically into your joys and sorrows. The extreme development of commerce and industry has brought in its train in almost every country a spirit of rush and hurry, a policy of "hustle" in which the ordinary human sentiments are utterly separated from business. The special virtues of the French race have prevented this to a large extent in France, and it is still as true to-day as it was in the time Dickens wrote of in his "Tale of Two Cities," that "a French Telson's bank could live and prosper in apartments which would have ruined a Telson's bank in Lombard Street." Thus in France your baker, your greengrocer, and your *chiffonier* even, demand from you your respect as well as your custom.

To come to the special features of the French character, perhaps the most remarkable is their sense of proportion in all things, their avoidance of extremes, and one manifestation of this is to be found in the general temperance or sobriety of the French working-classes. This may appear strange in a country where the chief industry is wine, where the first question you are asked at the restaurant, however humble its character is: *Quel vin, Monsieur?* (What wine do you take, sir?), but it must be noted that it is "temperance," not total abstinence. A great deal has been said of late about the increased amount of drinking in France, but I think again that it is largely a paper-increase due to better systems of collecting data. Drunkenness is, I believe, just as rare as ever it was. It is true, however, that there has been a tendency of late towards substituting spirits and absinthe for the more wholesome wines, and this has caused a crusade against "alcoholic liqueurs." Much has been made of the rapid formation of temperance societies in France, and the growth of the temperance movement has been pointed to as an evidence of the

existence and increase of the excessive drinking habit. But it must be noted that by the temperance movement is meant a movement directed against spirits, bitters, *apéritifs*, absinthe, and not against either wine, beer, or cider. In all the literature issued by these societies, (which are the outcome of the efforts of highly placed medical authorities) wine, beer and cider are specially mentioned as the proper and hygienic drinks to be taken, at meals. The beer is, however, all "lager beer," and has a very low percentage of alcohol. A society opened on the Boulevard de Belleville a restaurant with all alcoholic drinks excluded, but though the food supplied was exceptionally good and cheap they failed to attract any custom, and eventually they admitted wine, limiting the quantity, however, to a *demisetier* (about half a pint) per individual at each meal. Then they immediately attracted a large number of workmen. I went there often myself, and found that many of them, while they did not wish to dispense with wine to their meals, were only too glad to find a place where they were not expected to consume more than they wanted, for the benefit of the *bistrot*, or for the purpose of treating and being treated by their comrades. The co-operative restaurants also discountenance the use of spirits, and as the most eminent in the medical profession have condemned them there is no doubt that their use will decline, as the French have still a great respect for diplomas and scientific authority. I saw myself a great change in this respect, and whereas formerly on Mondays the restaurant keepers used to treat their customers to the coffee and a *petit verre*, most workmen now invariably ask for an extra bottle of good wine to the table instead, and also the absinthe for *apéritif* is now displaced by a glass of white wine.

Allied with temperance is the habit of thrift and economy. Volumes have been written on the saving habits of the French, but while I am ready to admit that much of this habit is due to their general prudence, I think most writers fail to realise in what manner

they save and in what direction they curtail their expenditure. First and foremost, they do not curtail the food bill, though the French housewife by her knowledge of scientific cookery and by her ability to obtain an endless variety of good vegetables, can produce luxury in eating where the English household would get bare sustenance. As an example that they do not spare the food bill, a family of three—father, mother, and son—used a pound and a half of butter a week, though the French never on any account eat bread and butter. It all went in cooking, and none but fresh, unsalted butter is used. Margarine is unknown, nor do they save in any way in essential clothing, that is in underclothing, linen, &c., but where they do curtail expenditure is in their utter refusal to keep up a standard of outside appearance above their means. No one can be more spruce than your French man or woman on occasions, but to follow the fashions for the sake of appearing what they are not is abhorrent to them. It is all very well to condemn the working classes in England for their extravagance, but how can it be otherwise when appearances count for so much in every branch of life, when it can be said that a man wishing to get on in life, or even merely wishful to keep his foothold, cannot afford to know poor people, be they ever so worthy.

Contrast the waiters and waitresses in the French shops with the lords and duchesses who sell you buttons and needles in an English drapery emporium. The fact of an individual going to "business" or even "following a profession" instead of simply going to work, does not seem to necessitate living, or appearing to live, at the rate of £200 a year, if his salary is only £70 or £80. And thus the schoolmistress, be she ever so qualified by diplomas, will dress and appear in the simple taste suitable to her modest income instead of struggling to keep up the appearance of the middle class, on a salary below that of a good Lancashire weaver. But above all, where the thrifty Frenchman has a great advantage over the would-be thrifty English artisan is in the cheapness of

pleasure. Consider the vast sums of money spent on Bank-holidays in English industrial districts, in proportion to the nature and degree of pleasure obtained. I do not for a moment suggest that it is ill-spent money provided the general results were beneficial, and truly enjoyable; but I think most will agree that the only virtue in rushing crowds of people into a seaside town is in the escape it provides from the awfulness of a holiday which might otherwise be spent, say in Wigan or Oldham. It is just here where the French have the pull; there is so much pleasure to be obtained by merely being alive in your own town on a idle day. Especially is this true in the capital, where museums and shows of all kinds, including the splendid "Jardin des Plantes," are open free always on holidays and Sundays, and mostly on ordinary work-days. Climate, of course, has a great deal to do with this, but not by any means all. What drive in the finest barouche in London, is equal to a three halfpenny ride on a Paris omnibus, or a 15 mile boat ride for one penny, through Paris, on the Seine from Auteuil to Charenton? The boulevards, with their seats under shady trees, are found in all French towns, and contribute no little to the pleasure of being out. When the French artisan, however, desires to take his family for a treat, he will not spare his money, and will engage a *voiture* for a drive in the country, with a good dinner at a decent restaurant, and finish up with a good seat at a theatre in the city. These are rare events, however, and, at any rate, he gets his money's worth, and for that day at least, enjoys himself as fully and in as refined a manner as any bourgeois in France. It is the dreary dulness of the daily life in English industrial towns, especially on the Sunday, that is responsible for the transformation of quiet seaside and country places into pandemoniums at holiday times.

Preconceived notions and realities are often diametrically opposed, and especially is this so in the idea of the changeable character of the French. Can anything be more ludicrous than a race of reckless, ever-changing people as we are, giving this fictitious character to our

custom-ridden, steady-going, conservative neighbours. The Revolution changed many things, especially in the outward form of things, but in the essentials of national character it changed nothing, and habits of old-time domestic economy, which have long ago died out in England, are still kept up not only in the heart of rural France, where, as Mr. Hamerton has shown, a kind of primitive communism often exists, but also in the faubourgs of the capital.

All the chief points in the character of the race are bound up in one great ruling social instinct, which goes far to justify the adoption of the last word—*Fraternité*—on the national motto. As this sociability is proverbial, there is no need to expound on it, except by one example, that sitting on the banks of the Seine, on the night of July 14, watching the fireworks from the bridge at Auteuil, one would have thought that all Grenelle was one vast family, so free and so genial was the intercourse between all and sundry.

Of the æsthetic and intellectual side of the character the most striking thing is the predominance of the artistic side over the natural. Edward Fay, I think, writing in the *Clarion* some years ago, makes a Frenchman say: "*Non, je n'aime pas la nature, c'est trop désordonné.*" (No, 'I don't like nature, it is too untidy.) It is not exactly true of all the French, but nearly so. They do like nature, but they like to improve it with art. They are fond of woods and trees, provided the latter are nicely trimmed, and the former well provided with good paths, and *al fresco* restaurants and dancing greens.

In purely intellectual matters, perhaps their greatest shortcoming is that of being too aridly logical, too apt to form opinions on too-sharply defined premises, and pursue them to conclusions without regard to possible modifying factors. The education of the people, though thorough in some matters, is somewhat too narrowing; it is too obviously destined merely for the purpose of making good artisans, without regard to the deeper and broader aspects of true education. And this defect in

education accentuates the mental defect and makes them incapable often of understanding conclusions arrived at from other standpoints than their own. It is a good sign of the times, however, that such influential leaders of thought as Anatole France and Francis de Pressensé recognise this defect and are trying to influence the public mind towards counteracting it.

And now, this work of love draws to a close, and in order to be truly conventional, I should dabble in prophecy and make a forecast of the future. All such forecasts, however, are of the nature of wishes; one always prophesies what one desires. As I write these closing lines, however, the treaty between England and France has been signed, and it may be that this augurs well for a better understanding in this country of our Gallic neighbours. With questions of high foreign politics, this book has little, however, to do. With internal affairs, as a true, if humble, friend of France, I would like to make the following pronouncement:—That it depends on the wisdom of the present Government of France whether the future economic changes in France come peacefully, constitutionally, and in a continual upward progress, or fraught with all the evils of catastrophic revolutions. If those whom the people have entrusted with ruling the national destinies, in their turn, will trust this law-abiding people with the ordinary freedom of the individual consistent with their high state of civilisation, and now that they have passed through the late dangerous crises, will reward the people who supported them by real social reforms, the reign of political and civil government will continue. If, on the other hand, they forfeit that trust by supineness, they will play the game of the reactionaries, will disgust the workers with all politics, and will compel them to oppose political reaction, not with political progress, but with an economic civil war, which, if it is fraught with great possibilities is also fraught with great dangers.

APPENDIX.

On the following page is the model of a certificate which employers must give to their employees when they leave. In the last column of observations the usual formula is: "Leaves free from all engagements." In case of dispute as whether the employee has, or has not, filled his contract, they must have recourse to the Conseil des Prud'hommes. It is not usual to make remarks as to the quality of the man's work, whether to his advantage or otherwise.

There are also in the Appendix a few models of menus of workmen's restaurants. These restaurants are of two kinds. The poorer kind makes what is called the *plat du jour*. That is to say on each day in addition to the soup, boiled meat and vegetables which form the staple, one other dish of meat as an alternative, either a roast or a *vagoût* of veal, rabbit, pork, &c. Of course, salads, cheese, and dessert, are always available. In the *plats du jour* cafés there is no paper menu; the dish of the day is chalked on a blackboard along with the dessert. The workmen who frequent these restaurants either take soup, and then half a portion of the *plat du jour*, or soup, boiled beef and vegetables, this they follow with a salad and dessert.

The other class of restaurants, which are much more patronised by the skilled artisan, also supply the *bouillon et bœuf*, but have a much larger choice of alternative dishes, as the accompanying menus will show.

Model of Certificate given to workmen on leaving employment.
This Certificate is compulsory by law.

COMPAGNIE FRANCAISE DES MOTEURS A GAZ
ET DES CONSTRUCTIONS MECANIQUES.

Capital: 2,600,000 francs.

155, Rue Croix-Nivert.

Nom et Prénoms.	Fonctions	Dates		Observations.
		de l'entre	de la sortie	
<i>Bertaux Jules.</i>	<i>Ajusteur.</i>	<i>17 De- cembre, 1900,</i>	<i>15 No- vembre, 1902.</i>	<i>Sorti Libre de tout engagement.</i>



Paris, 15 Novembre, 1902.

(Signed by Manager).

PLAT DU JOUR.

Lundi, 12 Septembre.

Ordinaire	...	...	...	...	...	40 c.
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<u>Lapin Sauté</u>	...	...	...	...	...	60 c.
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DESSERT.

Mendians	...	...	...	...	...	15 c.
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Suisse...	...	...	...	...	...	10 c.
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Fruits divers	...	...	...	...	10 c. et 20 c.
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The above is copied exactly from a restaurant in Ménilmontant
The underlined item is the dish for the day, and will change every
day.

Translation.

BILL OF FARE.

Monday, 12th September.

Ordinary (Soup and Beef)...	...	...	...	4d.
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Stuffed Rabbit	...	...	...	6d.
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DESSERT.

Mixed dried fruits	...	...	...	1½d.
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Cream cheese	...	...	...	1d.
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Fresh fruits	...	...	...	1d. and 2d.
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MAISON TAILLEUR.

Café Restaurant—Traiteur—Marchand de Vins.

Ménu du 3 Septembre, 1901.

Ordinaire	40 c.	
Tête de veau a l'huile	30 c.	(Calf's head in oil.
Veau Jardinière ...	30 c.	(Stewed veal & mixed vegetables.)
Lapin mariné	60 c.	(Jugged rabbit.)
Epéule de mouton rotie	50 c.	(Roast mutton.)
Purée de pommes ...	15 c.	(Crushed potatoes.
Chouxfleurs au gratin	20 c.	(Cauliflower with cheese.)
Nouilles	15 c.	(Macaroni.)
Salades	10 c.	(Salads.)
Dessert : Fromage demi-sel	10 c.	Gruyère 15 c. Suisses 10 c.
	Raisins, Pommes, &c. 15 c.	

(Dessert : Salt cheese, Gruyère, Cream, Grapes, Apples, &c.)

The dishes at 50 c. and 60 c. can be ordered in half portions at 25 c. and 30 c. An average artisan will order for his mid-day meal, say, Veau Jardinière, 3d. ; Chouxfleurs, 2d. ; Nouilles, 1½d. ; Dessert, 1½d. ; a half-litre of wine, 3½d. (though often only a quarter for 2d.); bread, 1d. ; and coffee after the meal, 1½d. ; making a total of 1s. to 1s. 3d. If he is hard up he will cut off the coffee and dessert, or if he wishes to be very economical he will take the ordinaire soup, boiled beef, and boiled vegetables. I have rarely seen a workman's déjeuner come under 16 or 18 sous, i.e., 8d. or 9d. I have never seen a Parisian workman bring his dinner. Eating in a workshop is unknown.

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